

Embodied Narratives: Translating Literary Moments into Spatial Experience through Exhibition Design

In Kuan Lee
2026

AUT Master of Design Programme

An exegesis submitted to the Auckland University of Technology,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Design

0. Abstract

Key words: Embodied narratives; exhibition design; spatial translation; immersive environments; atmosphere; light as medium; materiality; spatial installation; phenomenology; mono no aware.

Embodied Narratives asks: How might an experiential embodied engagement with literary works be activated through exhibition design? Positioned as a practice-based inquiry, the project explores exhibition design as a form of spatial narrative, where drawing, making, and material experimentation function as embodied modes of engaging with literature. Rather than treating literary works as content to be represented, the research approaches them as catalysts for spatial imagination, where meaning is generated through an iterative process of interpretation, visualisation, and material translation.

Using the writings of Osamu Dazai as a starting point for spatial design exploration, the project develops a series of spatial responses that emerge through close reading, sketching, modelling, and installation testing. In this process, the act of design becomes a form of embodied interpretation: literary themes of alienation, identity, and emotional instability are not illustrated directly, but are translated into spatial conditions, material tensions, and atmospheric compositions. This establishes a relay between text and space, where the researcher's engagement with literature is continuously reconfigured through design actions.

While early explorations foregrounded light as a narrative device, the research evolved toward a broader understanding of atmosphere as an experiential condition shaped by the interaction of light, shadow, material, and spatial arrangement. The notion of the

'moment', informed by the ephemeral intensity of fireworks, becomes central to the final design approach. Here, spatial experience is constructed not through linear narrative progression but through a concentrated and transient configuration of elements, where emotional and psychological states are activated through immersion, proximity, and sensory encounter.

Through iterative prototyping and reflective making, the research demonstrates that exhibition design can function as a process of activating embodied engagement with literary works. The narrative emerges through into the relationship among body, material, and space. Ultimately, the project proposes that literary experiences can be reconfigured as immersive spatial encounters, enabling new forms of emotional and experiential engagement beyond the written text.

Content

	List of Figures	4
	Front matter	10
1.	Introduction	11
	Research Question	13
	Objectives	
2.	Positioning Statement	14
3.	Contextual Review	15
3.1	Teoretical Frameworks: From Representation to Embodied Experience	17
3.2	Experiential frameworks	18
3.3	Phenomenological Framework: Embodiment and Spatial Perception	20
3.4	Semiotic Framework: Space as a System of Signs	22
3.5	Summary	24
4.	Methodological Approach	25
4.1	Method 1 Embodied Reading and Interpretive Translation	27
4.2	Method 2 Phenomenological Spatial Experimentation	28
4.3	Method 3 Digital Modelling as Spatial Simulation	29
4.4	Methodological Overview	30
5.	Concept	
5.0	Phase 1 Light as an Experiential Medium	31
5.1	Phase 2 From Biographical Narrative to Spatial Framework	38
5.2	Phase 3 Five Scenes as an Experiential System	44
5.3	Phase 4 Final Concept – The Firework as a Condensed Spatial Moment	65
6.	Conclusion	93
7.	Bibliography	96

List of Figures

3. Contextual Review

- 3.01 Ann Hamilton, *The Event of a Thread*, Park Avenue Armory, December 5, 2012–January 6, 2013. Image from Art21, <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/ann-hamilton-the-event-of-a-thread-short/>.
- 3.02 Yuk King Tan, *The Territorials*, June 20–July 9, 2000. Image from Camden Art Centre, <https://camdenartcentre.org/whats-on/yuk-king-tan>.
- 3.03 Catherine Griffiths, *Walk With Me*, Gallery 1, Frontbox, Outdoor Projection, July 30–October 24, 2025. Image from Ngutukaka, <https://ngutukaka.nz/exhibitions/catherine-griffiths-walk-with-me>.
- 3.04 Olafur Eliasson, *360° Room for All Colours*, 2002. Image from Olafur Eliasson Studio, <https://olafureliasson.net/artwork/360-room-for-all-colours-2002/>.
- 3.05 James Turrell, *Split Decision*, 2018. Image from Kunsthau Bregenz, <https://www.kuma.art/en/exponat/split-decision>.
- 3.06 Chiharu Shiota, *Me Somewhere Else*, 2018. Image from Chiharu Shiota Studio, <https://www.chiharu-shiota.com/me-somewhere-else>.
- 3.07 Christian Boltanski, *Personnes*, Monumenta 2010, Grand Palais, 2010. Image from AD Magazine, <https://www.admagazine.fr/adactualites/article/christian-boltanski-5-oeuvres-phare>.
- 3.08 Alexander Brodsky, exhibition at Architekturzentrum Wien, 2011. Image from ArchDaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/375085/alexander-brodsky-at-architekturzentrum-wien-in-2011>.
- 3.09 Shirin Neshat, *Born of Fire*, April 20–September 1, 2025, Parrish Art Museum. Image from Parrish Art Museum, <https://parrishart.org/exhibitions/shirin-neshat/>.

4. Methodological Approach

- 4.01 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, the version of *No Longer Human I read*.
- 4.02 Chiharu Shiota, *The Eye of the Storm*, 2022. Image from Chiharu Shiota Studio, <https://www.chiharu-shiota.com/the-eye-of-the-storm>.
- 4.03 Chiharu Shiota, *Silent Word*, 2022. Image from Chiharu Shiota Studio, <https://www.chiharu-shiota.com/silent-word>.
- 4.04 Olafur Eliasson, *Pluriverse Assembly*, 2021. Image from Olafur Eliasson Studio, <https://olafureliasson.net/artwork/pluriverse-assembly-2021/>.
- 4.05 Philip Beesley, *Astrocyte*, Design Exchange, Toronto, 2017. Image from Philip Beesley Studio Inc., <https://www.philipbeesleystudioinc.com/sculpture/astrocyte/>.
- 4.06 Philip Beesley, *Radiant Soil*, Paris, 2013. Image from Philip Beesley Studio Inc., <https://www.philipbeesleystudioinc.com/sculpture/radiant-soil/>.
- 4.07 Ryuichi Sakamoto, *Seeing Sound, Hearing Time*, December 21, 2024–March 30, 2025, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Image from Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, <https://www.mot-art-museum.jp/en/exhibitions/RS/>.
- 4.08 Thomas Heatherwick, *Seed Cathedral*, Expo 2010 Shanghai, Shanghai, 2010. Image from Thisispaper, <https://www.thisispaper.com/mag/seed-cathedral-heatherwick-studio>.

List of Figures

5. Concept

5.0 Phase 1 Light as an Experiential Medium

5.01	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, sunset light illuminating an interior space.	5.13	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, spatial study of a circular book display system.
5.02	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, study of a unique formation of light within interior space.	5.14	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, exploration of individual column-based book display structures within an exhibition space.
5.03	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, shadows of leaves cast on a white wall, exploring how natural shadow patterns generate different spatial and “artistic” qualities.	5.15	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, exhibition lighting design mapping different stages of the author’s creative development, arranged from left to right as early, middle, and late phases.
5.04	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, exploration of the ambiguous aesthetics of light.	5.16	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, spatial atmosphere study where darker lighting represents later-stage works and emotional intensity, while brighter lighting reflects early-stage works, combining light conditions with narrative and emotional structure.
5.05-07	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, extended study of the ambiguous aesthetics of light (version 2.0).	5.17	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, integrated lighting and spatial composition study of the exhibition environment, exploring how illumination affects emotional interpretation of different narrative stages.
5.08	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, material-based printmaking experiments exploring how different textures simulate the projection, refraction, and distortion of light in space.		
5.09	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, exploration of emotional expression through light and space using coloured acrylic panels to refract vibrant light and shadow.		
5.10	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, study of layered and conflicting emotions represented through coloured light refraction in space.		
5.11	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, investigation of colour, light, and spatial atmosphere as tools for emotional and narrative expression.		
5.12	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, circular exhibition space design where books are displayed on individual columns, representing the author’s early, middle, and late works.		

List of Figures

5A. Concept

5.1 Phase 2 From Biographical Narrative to Spatial Framework

5A.01	In Kuan Lee, 2025. InDesign, timeline mapping key life experiences of Osamu Dazai.	5B.07	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, the rods symbolise the invisible damage caused by social systems, class norms and cultural expectations.
5A.02	In Kuan Lee, 2025. InDesign, exhibition concept plan integrating Osamu Dazai's life narrative with selected works from different creative stages.	5B.08	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Scene One Render, 2025. Rhinoceros 3D rendering by the author.
5A.03	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Sketch of the design conception process.	5B.09	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Different perspectives of '間'.
5A.04	In Kuan Lee, 2025. InDesign, top view of the architectural form derived from the kanji 人 ('human') from No Longer Human.	5B.10	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Scene Two Render.
5A.05-06	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Prototype of the kanji structure.	5B.11	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, suspended fabric panels displaying early works by Osamu Dazai, exploring themes of identity, resistance, and isolation.

5B. Concept

5.2 Phase 3 Five Scenes as an Experiential System

5B.01	In Kuan Lee, 2025. InDesign, new exhibition layout planning.	5B.12	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, End of Scene Two.
5B.02	In Kuan Lee, 2025. InDesign, the narrative thread of the kanji '人間失格'.	5B.13	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Section of three scenes.
5B.03	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, the process of the stretch film being stretched from above and below.	5B.14	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Three Render.
5B.04	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, the experiment 2.0 of stretch film.	5B.15	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Scene Three Render 2, 2025.
5B.05	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, opening scene of the exhibition, where a key statement reflecting Dazai's denial of self and critique of societal pressures is projected onto the wall through shadow and light, forming the viewer's first encounter upon entry.	5B.16	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, the most hopeful and destructive scenes in Dazai's life form a stark contrast.
5B.06	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene One class lighting installation digital model, the bright lights above and cool-toned lights below, represent different social classes.	5B.17	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, names of Osamu Dazai suspended and bound with red threads, symbolising the erasure and fragmentation of identity under social pressure.
		5B.18	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, suspended red fabric strips

List of Figures

					5C. Concept
					5.3 Phase 4 Final Concept – The Firework as a Condensed Spatial Moment
	printed with hostile voices, symbolising aggression, shame, and psychological violence imposed by society.	5C.01		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, iterative development of Scene One, exploring spatial and conceptual refinement.	
5B.19	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Four introduces external hostility and public condemnation directed at Osamu Dazai, marking a period of isolation and psychological descent.	5C.02		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, introduction of stacked acrylic frames, fireworks imagery, and camera symbolism to construct a space of observation, spectacle, and judgement.	
5B.20	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, final scene where the spatial sequence transitions from enclosure to openness, framing death as both an ending and a potential release, open to interpretation.	5C.03		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, vertical elements, including suspended structures and cascading ribbons, combined with fragmented newspaper textures, articulate social pressure, surveillance, and the circulation of public discourse.	
5B.21	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, suspended red and white fabric with inscribed text creates a tension between death and purity, expressing emotional conflict and quiet resolution in the final spatial atmosphere.	5C.04-07		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Sketches exploring the initial concept of the ‘firework moment,’ investigating spatial explosion and visual fragmentation.	
5B.22	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene One in Objectspace.	5C.08-09		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Drawing, further development drawings exploring spatial and conceptual variations of the ‘firework moment’.	
5B.23	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Two in Objectspace.	5C.10		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Drawing, the circular suspended frame, eliminating a fixed scene of orientation.	
5B.24	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Three in Objectspace.	5C.11-13		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, material experiments using glass of varying shapes, colours, and scales to investigate light interaction, showing how proximity to the light source affects shadow size, clarity, and texture.	
5B.25	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Four in Objectspace.	5C.14-15		In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, material experiment using prism glass exploring dynamic light refraction, where shifting light and movement generate continuously changing colour reflections and unstable visual effects.	
5B.26	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Five in Objectspace.				
5B.27	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Rhino 3D rendering, Scene Five in Objectspace.				

List of Figures

5C.16-17	In Kuan Lee, 2025. Photograph, material exploration combining malleable wire mesh with fabric to test light projection and shadow formation, producing varied spatial and atmospheric effects depending on material combinations.	5C.34	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, floral elements illuminated under water ripple lighting, creating the illusion of submersion and fluid movement.
5C.18	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Rhino 3D rendering, installation rendering presenting the resolved spatial and material system of the 'firework moment'.	5C.35	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, partially fabricated floral elements with burnt surface textures.
5C.19	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Rhino 3D rendering, bird's-eye view of visitors entering the installation, illustrating spatial circulation and overall composition.	5C.36-38	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, lighting test exploring colour variation and its effect on spatial atmosphere.
5C.20	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Rhino 3D rendering, detail view of suspended elements, including floral forms and white ribbons, contributing to the layered spatial composition of the final installation.	5C.39	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, final lighting selection using red illumination to define the desired emotional and spatial effect.
5C.21	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Rhino 3D rendering, interior perspective from within the installation, illustrating the viewer's spatial and visual experience of the 'firework moment'.	5C.40	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, white chrysanthemum in the process of burning, evoking a sense of ephemerality and quiet melancholy.
5C.22-27	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, lighting with water-like textures to explore different colours and dynamic surface effects.	5C.41	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, installed circular structure with floral elements fixed in position within the test space.
5C.28-29	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, laser-cut white fabric with printed monologue text, producing burnt-like edges that evoke fragility and deterioration.	5C.42	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, circular installation viewed under water ripple lighting, highlighting shifting spatial perception and light movement.
5C.30-31	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, screen-printing process on red fabric, documenting the production of text-based material elements.	5C.43	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, abstract suspended structure under red lighting, emphasising spatial tension and emotional intensity.
5C.32	In Kuan Lee, 2026. InDesign, text selection for acrylic lettering.	5C.44	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, installation process of abstract structure, with materials pre-positioned on the ground prior to final assembly and fixing.
5C.33	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, fabricated acrylic text elements.	5C.45	In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, acrylic text installation under normal ambient lighting conditions.

List of Figures

- 5C.46 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, acrylic text installation with lighting removed, revealing material presence without illumination.
- 5C.47-48 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, acrylic text installation viewed from multiple angles under water ripple lighting, exploring spatial and perceptual variation.
- 5C.49 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, Reducing the variety of flowers helps reduce visual distractions.
- 5C.50 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, The way the flowers are hung has been reshaped into a cone.
- 5C.51 In Kuan Lee, 2026. Photograph, the shape of the metal mesh mimics the smoke left after fireworks disappear.

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where appropriately acknowledged and referenced.

This work has been completed without the use of artificial intelligence or generative AI tools, and all content is the result of the author's own research and practice.

This work has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or other institution of higher education.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who have supported me throughout the development of this project.

To my supervisors, Sue Gallagher and Caroline Powley, for your guidance, critical feedback, and continuous encouragement. Your insights have been instrumental in shaping both the direction and depth of this research.

To my family, for your unwavering support, patience, and understanding throughout this process.

To Auckland University of Technology, for providing the facilities, resources, and environment that made this project possible, including access to studio and testing spaces.

To my peers and friends, for the conversations, support, and shared experiences that helped sustain me through this journey.

1. Introduction

Mine has been a life of much shame.

(恥の多い生涯を送って来ました。)

(Dazai, 2023)

This opening line from *No Longer Human* by Osamu Dazai does not simply describe a life; it exposes a condition—one defined by tension, contradiction, and the inability to reconcile the self with the world. Within this research, such tensions are not approached as narrative content alone, but as spatial and experiential conditions that can be translated through exhibition design.

A pivotal moment that informs this project is the fireworks festival incident in Dazai's life, where the tensions between public image and private collapse became violently exposed. During this event, Dazai was seen engaging in an intimate encounter with another woman in a public setting, an act that was witnessed by his wife and young daughter. What followed was not only personal rupture but also public condemnation. Journalists and literary critics rapidly circulated narratives that framed him as morally corrupt and emotionally unstable, like the fireworks themselves: brilliant, fleeting, and quickly dissolving into darkness. This moment became both spectacle and erasure. It revealed a life suspended between excess and emptiness.

A fleeting public act: intimate, impulsive, and exposed, collapsed the boundary between private emotion and public judgment. This moment operates as a dense convergence of oppositions: spectacle and shame,

animation and void, intimacy and alienation. Fireworks embody a form of intensity that emerges, disperses, and leaves only residual traces. Within this research, the 'moment' becomes a critical conceptual device, not as a literal event to be represented, but as a spatial condition through which emotional and psychological tensions are activated.

This project is situated within a practice-based inquiry that asks: How might an experiential embodied engagement with literary works be activated through exhibition design? Rather than approaching literature as content to be illustrated, the research treats it as a generative force that produces spatial imagination through processes of reading, drawing, modelling, and making. In this sense, design becomes a form of embodied interpretation, where the act of translating text into space is not linear, but iterative, intuitive, and materially driven.

During the research, the design inquiry underwent a significant shift. While the project initially developed as a sequential exhibition structured around five narrative scenes from Dazai's life, the iterative design experimentation gradually revealed that the narrative's emotional complexity could be communicated more effectively through a single immersive installation. Rather than representing Dazai's biography chronologically, the outcome distills multiple psychological and narrative conditions into one spatial moment, allowing visitors to encounter these tensions simultaneously.

1. Introduction

The writings of Osamu Dazai resonate with this research not only for its thematic exploration of alienation and identity but for its fragmented narrative structure and emotional intensity, qualities that align closely with my own spatial design practice. As a designer, I am drawn to forms of storytelling that resist resolution and instead operate through ambiguity, tension, and partial revelation. These characteristics inform my approach to space as an environment that is not didactic, but affective, where meaning is encountered through movement, atmosphere, and sensory engagement rather than explanation.

This approach is informed by the work of Jonathan Hale (Hale, 2012), particularly his discussion of embodiment and atmosphere in narrative environments, where space is understood not as a neutral container but as an active participant in shaping perception, memory, and emotional experience. Drawing on this perspective, the project positions exhibition design as a practice that activates embodied engagement through spatial and atmospheric encounter.

Ultimately, this research does not seek to reconstruct a biography, nor to faithfully represent literary content. Instead, it explores how spatial design installation can operate as a medium of translation, where literary narratives are reconfigured into immersive, affective environments. Through this process, space becomes a site where emotional and psychological conditions are not explained, but experienced, allowing literature to be encountered through the body as much as through the mind.

How might an experiential embodied engagement with literary works be activated through exhibition design?

Objectives:

- To explore how spatial design, material conditions, and light, understood through the transient and explosive qualities of the firework, can translate literary narratives into embodied and emotionally immersive experiences.
- To reconstruct and interpret a key moment drawn from literary narrative as a spatial event, through an embodied design process of drawing, modelling, and material experimentation, rather than direct biographical representation.
- To investigate how abstract emotional states, such as shame, love, fragmentation, and despair, can be spatialised through iterative material exploration, transforming affect into tactile and atmospheric conditions.
- To develop a practice-led spatial design approach that integrates literary interpretation with installation-based methodologies, positioning space as an active medium of narrative construction.
- To examine how sensory engagement, through light, shadow, reflection, and material tension, can activate an embodied encounter with narrative, encouraging reflection on human fragility, contradiction, and impermanence.

2. Positioning Statement

This project explores how exhibition design can transform moments of tension and fragility into spatial experiences. It examines how exhibition design can transcend mere presentation to construct environments in which people can engage with narratives through physical sensation and sensory experience. Through the process of spatial translation, this project proposes that emotional experiences should be articulated as a state of immersion, rather than merely described through fixed narratives.

Drawing on the life and works of Osamu Dazai, the project initially developed through five exhibition scenes, each corresponding to a key period in his life. These scenes functioned as iterative spatial studies, exploring how distinct emotional conditions, such as alienation, societal pressure, disillusionment, and self-destruction, could be expressed through material, light, and spatial composition.

The project then shifted away from a linear, biographical narrative structure toward a more condensed and non-linear spatial articulation. Rather than presenting five separate stages, the final exhibition reconfigures these emotional and conceptual elements into a single immersive installation, where multiple forces and states coexist within one spatial moment.

This transformation reflects a critical design decision: that emotional experiences are not always singular or linear, but often layered, repetitive, and internally

conflicted. By collapsing the firework moment into one intensified environment, the project foregrounds coexistence over chronology, allowing visitors to physically navigate overlapping states of tension, fragmentation, and vulnerability.

While presented as a singular installation, the work retains its adaptability across different spatial contexts. The modular suspended structure enables the project to be reconfigured and exhibited in multiple sites, highlighting its responsiveness to varying architectural conditions.

Rather than functioning as a literary or biographical representation, the project draws from Dazai's writings to construct an affective spatial experience. Positioned between spatial installation and poetic interpretation, it draws upon Japanese aesthetic concepts such as 'mono no aware' (Joppich, 2023), the awareness of impermanence and the gentle sadness associated with transience, while engaging contemporary material and lighting strategies.

In doing so, the project contributes to spatial design discourse by proposing exhibition space as a medium of translation, where literary narratives are not illustrated but embodied through atmosphere, movement, and perception.

3. Contextual Review

3. Contextual Review

This contextual review situates the project within both theoretical and creative practice frameworks in spatial and exhibition design. It examines how narrative, perception, and meaning-making have been explored across phenomenology, semiotics, and experiential design, while also drawing on installation and spatial practices that translate emotion into environment.

This review did not treat theory and practice as separate domains; it interweaves key theoretical positions with relevant spatial and installation works. This approach positions the project within a broader field of design practice, where space operates not only as a container of information but as an active medium of embodied and affective experience.

Particular attention is given to practitioners who work with:

- **light as a narrative and atmospheric medium**
- **text as spatial material**
- **fragmented and immersive spatial structures**

These references provide a critical context for understanding how literary narratives can be translated into spatial and sensory conditions.

3. Contextual Review

3.1 Experiential Framework

In contemporary spatial and exhibition design, there is an increasing focus on how environments can move beyond storytelling toward embodied narrative experience. Rather than presenting narrative as a sequence of information, spatial design can construct conditions in which meaning is generated through movement, perception, and sensory engagement.

Jonathan Hale's concept of 'narrative environments' is central to this shift. Hale argues that narrative in space is not a fixed storyline but a relational and embodied condition, where the visitor actively constructs meaning through spatial experience (Hale, 2012). This perspective reframes exhibition design as a form of experiential translation, aligning closely with this project's aim to translate literary psychological states into spatial conditions.

To support this approach, the project draws on three key theoretical positions:

- **3.2 Kandampully et al.'s experiencescape, which explains how spatial atmospheres shape emotional and behavioural responses (Kandampully et al. 2023, 316-40).**
- **3.3 Gupta and Zieske's arts-based phenomenology, which was generated through embodied, sensory, and practice-led processes such as making, drawing, and installation (Gupta and Zieske 2024, 95-109).**
- **3.4 Plakoyiannaki et al.'s semiotic framework, which explains how meaning emerges through the interpretation of signs, where material, light, and form function as symbolic language (Plakoyiannaki et al. 2022, 256-71).**

Together, these frameworks support a move from representation to translation, where spatial design becomes a medium for constructing embodied and affective narrative experience.

3. Contextual Review

3.2 Experiential Framework

In “*Linking Servicescape and Experiencescape: Creating a Collective Focus for the Service Industry*”, Kandampully, Bilgihan, and Amer provided a critical foundation for understanding how spatial environments generate emotional and sensory engagement (Kandampully et al. 2023, 316-40). Expanding on Bitner’s notion of the “*Servicescapes*” (Bitner 1992, 57-71), the experiencescape shifts focus from functional space toward environments that construct meaning through atmosphere, interaction, and perception.

Rather than treating users as passive recipients, this framework positions visitors as active participants who co-create meaning through their engagement with space. As Kandampully et al. argue, environments do not simply stimulate the senses but also construct emotional and symbolic experiences (Kandampully et al., 2023).

For example, the transient and explosive qualities of the firework become a conceptual extension of light within the project. Light is understood not as a stable condition, but as an event: appearing, dispersing, and disappearing. This aligns with the experiencescape framework, in which emotional impact is generated through temporal and sensory variation rather than through fixed representation.

This experiential approach is further supported by several contemporary spatial and installation practices. Ann Hamilton’s *The Event of a Thread* (Fig. 3.01) constructs a responsive environment where



Figure 3.01: Ann Hamilton, *The Event of a Thread*.



Figure 3.02: Yuk King Tan, *The Territorials*.

suspended elements, movement, and collective participation generate a constantly shifting spatial condition. The work emphasises the relationship between body, material, and temporality, resonating with the project’s interest in spatialising fleeting moments.

Similarly, Yuk King Tan’s *The Territorials* (Fig. 3.02) engages with themes of spectacle and aftermath through the material traces of fireworks, exploring how celebration, destruction, and residue can coexist within a single spatial condition.



Figure 3.03: Catherine Griffiths,
Walk With Me.

In a different register, Catherine Griffiths's *Walk With Me* (Fig. 3.03) activates language as a spatial and embodied experience, where text is not simply read but encountered physically. This approach informs the project's use of suspended textual fragments as part of its spatial language.

Together, these works demonstrate how installation can operate as an experiential field, where meaning emerges through movement, perception, and atmospheric conditions rather than fixed narrative structures.

This approach also resonates with exhibition studies that emphasise affective engagement. As Tröndle et al. suggest, emotional resonance plays a key role in shaping visitors' experiences and memories of space (Tröndle et al. 2014, 140-73). In response, this project constructs spatial conditions where emotion is encountered through movement, atmosphere, and material tension, rather than explained through text.

By integrating experiential frameworks into the design process, the exhibition becomes less a narrative sequence and more a performative environment, one in which visitors move through and physically engage with layered emotional states.

3. Contextual Review

3.3 Phenomenological Framework: Embodiment and Spatial Perception

Phenomenology provides a critical lens for understanding how space is experienced, not as an abstract construct, but as something lived through the body. Rather than separating subject and object, this perspective emphasises perception as relational, formed through movement, sensation, and spatial encounter.

Gupta and Zieske's discussion of "*Arts-Based Phenomenological Research*" (Gupta and Zieske 2024, 95-109) is particularly relevant here, as it expands phenomenology into the domain of creative practice. Their work suggests that making through drawing, modelling, and material experimentation is not simply a method of representation, but also a way of thinking and knowing. In this sense, design processes themselves become forms of inquiry, where ideas are not fully formed in advance, but emerge through engagement with materials, light, and space.

This understanding directly informs the development of this project. As a spatial designer, the spatial propositions are not derived from a fixed narrative and then illustrated; instead, they are gradually discovered through iterative acts of making. In spatial and installation practices, material experimentation often operates not as a means of producing final forms, but as a way of exploring how atmospheres are perceived and constructed. The artists Olafur Eliasson, James Turrell, and Chiharu Shiota (Figs. 3.04-3.06) frequently work with elements such as fabric, thread, translucency, and controlled lighting to investigate how spatial conditions can evoke tension, ambiguity, or fragmentation.

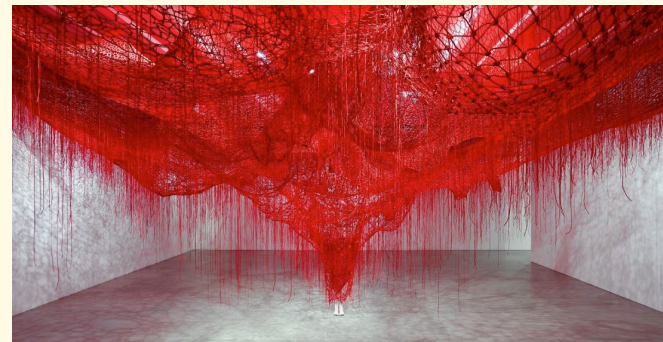


Figure 3.04: Olafur Eliasson, 360° Room for All Colours.

Figure 3.05: James Turrell, Split Decision.

Figure 3.06: Chiharu Shiota, Me Somewhere Else.

Rather than functioning as representational tools, these materials are used to shape sensory experience, allowing light to obscure as much as it reveals, and enabling spatial qualities to be felt through density, layering, and movement. In this sense, atmosphere is not designed as a fixed outcome, but emerges through the interaction between material, light, and the perceiving body.

This approach aligns with Merleau-Ponty (Maurice, 1982)'s proposition that the body is the primary site of perception. Space, in this sense, conditions how meaning is felt. Within the project, this is reflected in moments where spatial compression, restricted movement, or shifting light conditions alter the visitor's awareness of their own body. The aim is not to represent psychological states, but to construct situations in which they can be encountered.

This phenomenological position is also evident in installation practices that prioritise immersion over representation. For example, Chiharu Shiota's works made the environments constructed through suspended materials, density, and layering often produce a sense of entanglement or disorientation that cannot be reduced to a single meaning. These works do not communicate through explanation, but through presence, something that must be physically entered and experienced.

In this project, phenomenology therefore operates at two levels:

- **as a method, guiding the design process through iterative making.**
- **as an experience, shaping how the final spatial installation is encountered by the body.**

3. Contextual Review

3.4 Semiotic Framework: Space as a System of Signs

Semiotics offers a way of understanding how meaning is constructed through signs, symbols, and interpretation (Plakoyiannaki et al. 2022, 256-71). Within spatial and exhibition design, this shifts attention from what is displayed to how meaning is perceived, through material, light, form, and spatial arrangement.

The elements component operates as a kind of language. Textures, shadows, spatial framing, and visual contrasts all contribute to how visitors read and interpret an environment. Meaning is not fixed, but emerges through the interaction between the space and the viewer's own memory, cultural background, and emotional state.

This approach can be seen across a range of installation and spatial practices where meaning is constructed through fragments, traces, and symbolic layering rather than direct representation. In the work of Christian Boltanski (Fig. 3.07), for example, personal histories are often evoked through absence: dim lighting, archival photographs, worn materials, and repetitive arrangements create environments that feel both intimate and unreachable. His installations do not present narrative explicitly, but allow memory to surface through accumulation and loss, where objects function as fragile signs of lives no longer fully present.

A different spatial articulation can be observed in the work of Alexander Brodsky, particularly in his installation at Architekturzentrums Wien (Fig. 3.08). Here, architecture is treated as a semiotic residue, constructed



Figure 3.07: Christian Boltanski, Personnes.



Figure 3.08: Alexander Brodsky, exhibition at Architekturzentrums Wien.

from ephemeral materials such as paper, wood, and light. Meaning emerges not from a clear narrative, but from the suggestion of something that once existed and is now fragmenting, inviting the viewer to reconstruct it imaginatively.

In Shirin Neshat's *Born of Fire* (Fig. 3.09), language is inscribed onto the body, merging text with identity, memory, and cultural tension. Words do not operate as neutral carriers of meaning, but as charged surfaces that mediate between visibility and concealment.

This perspective is reflected in semiotic readings of visual media, where images are understood not as passive representations but as constructed fields of meaning. Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1993)'s notion of the punctum, for instance, describes the moment when an image produces a personal and emotional impact that cannot be fully explained. Similarly, Umberto Eco (Eco, 1989)'s idea of the "*Open Work*" suggests that interpretation remains inherently multiple and incomplete.

My understanding of space as a spatial designer translates these ideas into environments that invite reading rather than deliver a singular message. Space becomes a layered system of signs, where elements do not point to one fixed meaning, but generate a field of possible interpretations.

This approach can be seen in installation practices where text, symbols, and fragmented visual elements are embedded within space. Words may appear partially obscured, repeated, or suspended, requiring movement and shifting perspectives to be fully perceived. In such conditions, meaning unfolds gradually, shaped by the viewer's position and attention.

In this project, the semiotic framework informs how spatial elements are composed as narrative devices. Rather than explaining emotional states directly, meaning is constructed through signs embedded in materials, light, and spatial sequencing. Characters, fragments of text, and layered visual elements operate not as illustration, but as cues that guide interpretation.



Figure 3.09: Shirin Neshat, *Born of Fire*

By treating space as a system of signs, the exhibition invites visitors to actively 'read' the environment. Emotional resonance emerges not from explicit narration, but from the process of perception itself, through encountering, interpreting, and assembling meaning within space.

3. Contextual Review

3.5 Summary

This contextual review has outlined the theoretical and creative practice frameworks that inform the translation of literary narratives into embodied spatial experience. By drawing on phenomenology, semiotics, and experiential design, alongside relevant installation practices, the research positions space as an active medium of perception rather than a passive container of meaning.

Across these frameworks, a shared shift becomes evident: from representation toward embodiment. Narrative is no longer understood as something to be described or illustrated, but as something that unfolds through movement, atmosphere, and sensory engagement.

Importantly, this review also situates the project within a broader field of spatial and installation practice, where light, material, and fragmentation are used to construct immersive environments that invite interpretation rather than prescribe it.

These theoretical and practical contexts provide the foundation for the methodological and conceptual development that follows. The next chapter builds on this framework by examining how these ideas are explored through design processes of drawing, modelling, and material experimentation, and how they inform the construction of spatial narrative.

4. Methodological approach

4. Methodological approach

This research adopts a practice-led, arts-based phenomenological methodology to investigate how an embodied engagement with literary works can be activated through exhibition design. Rather than treating literature as content to be represented, the methodology operates as a process of spatial translation, where reading, drawing, modelling, and making become interpretive acts.

The project is informed by Jonathan Hale (Hale, 2012)'s concept of narrative environments, which positions spatial experience as an embodied and relational condition. Within this framework, meaning is not fixed or communicated directly, but emerges through movement, perception, and sensory experience. This aligns with a phenomenological approach, where the body becomes the primary site through which space is understood and interpreted.

To support this inquiry, the methodology is structured through three interrelated methods:

- **4.1 Method 1 Embodied Reading and Interpretive Translation**
- **4.2 Method 2 Phenomenological Spatial Experimentation**
- **4.3 Method 3 Digital Modelling as Spatial Simulation**

4. Methodological approach

4.1 Method 1: Embodied Reading and Interpretive Translation



Figure 4.01: The version of *No Longer Human* I read.

This study begins with an intuitive and emotional engagement with literary works; within this context, reading is regarded as an embodied act rather than a purely analytical process. The emotional responses, mental imagery and atmospheric impressions generated during the act of reading are all treated as raw material for spatial thinking.

This methodology draws in part from Osamu Dazai's "*No Longer Human*" (Dazai, 2023), a work written in an intensely subjective and fragmentary narrative voice. As the novel unfolds through an unreliable first-person perspective, the boundaries between lived experience, performance and self-perception remain perpetually blurred and unverifiable. The study does not seek to clarify or analyse this ambiguity, but rather regards it as a productive state in which uncertainty, contradiction and emotional distortion become key driving forces for spatial interpretation.

To deepen the interpretive framework, the project draws on psychoanalytic theory, particularly "*On Freud's Mourning and Melancholia*" (Bokanowski, 2018). Bokanowski's notion of internalised loss, where the ego absorbs and becomes consumed by unresolved grief, offers a lens for understanding the melancholic undercurrent of Dazai's writing. Although not yet translated into formal design, this theory helps establish an early conceptual direction: the eventual spatialisation of emotional voids, psychological fragmentation, and states of internal tension.

This methodology moves beyond traditional literary analysis towards a design-oriented interpretation, transforming narrative elements into spatial conditions such as light, density, a sense of suspension, and fragmentation. The focus lies not in retelling the story, but in extracting and transforming its experiential qualities.

4. Methodological approach

4.2 Method 2: Phenomenological Spatial Experimentation

I adopt a phenomenological approach, exploring the relationships between materials, light and space to understand how emotional and sensory experiences are constructed. This method prioritises iterative testing and sensory exploration to develop an embodied understanding of space.

As a spatial designer, this process embodies a material-led, practice-oriented mindset, wherein knowledge is generated through hands-on engagement, adjustment and the experience of spatial conditions. Design decisions are not predetermined, but emerge through the interaction between the body, materials and the environment. This approach draws inspiration from the following installation art practices:

- **Chiharu Shiota** (Figs. 4.02-4.03)– Immersive thread environments that spatialise memory and absence
- **Olafur Eliasson** (Fig. 4.04)– Atmospheric manipulation of light and perception.
- **Philip Beesley** (Figs. 4.05-4.06)– Responsive environments that engage the body and the senses.

These references demonstrate that spatial environments can function as emotional systems, where meaning is constructed not through visual presentation but through bodily experience. Within this context, material experimentation becomes not merely a technical process, but a conceptual design method for exploring emotion, perception and spatial narratives.

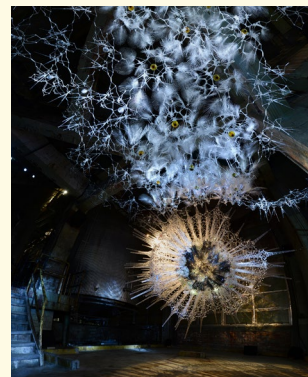
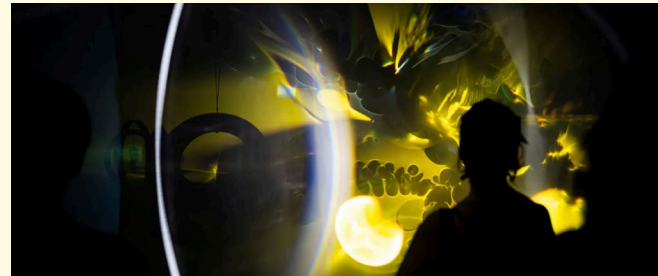


Figure 4.02: Chiharu Shiota, The Eye of the Storm.

Figure 4.03: Chiharu Shiota, Silent Word.

Figure 4.04: Olafur Eliasson, Pluriverse Assembly.

Figure 4.05: Philip Beesley, Astrocyte.

Figure 4.06: Philip Beesley, Radiant Soil.

4. Methodological approach

4.3 Method 3: Digital Modelling as Spatial Simulation

Digital modelling and rendering are employed as tools for testing spatial atmospheres and perceptual conditions. Through iterative simulations, this research explores how variations in light, scale, transparency and spatial composition influence emotional and sensory experiences.

As a spatial designer, digital modelling is a core component of my design practice, enabling the translation of abstract emotional concepts into environments where spatial testing can take place. Digital modelling allows for precise control over light, material properties and spatial relationships, thereby simulating and evaluating atmospheric conditions before physical realisation.

This approach allows a project to function as a speculative environment, within which spatial concepts can be rapidly developed, tested and refined. It extends phenomenological inquiry into the virtual realm, making the exploration of perception and atmosphere both flexible and precise.

Works such as Ryuichi Sakamoto's *Seeing Sound, Hearing Time* (Fig. 4.07) and Thomas Heatherwick's *Seed Cathedral* (Fig. 4.08) provide a reference for this research methodology, particularly in their ability to transform intangible phenomena into spatial experiences.

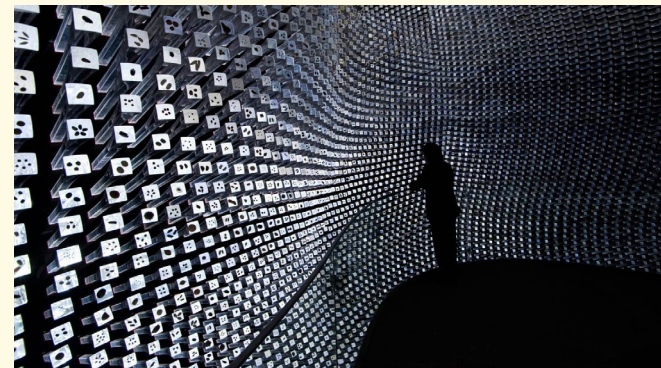


Figure 4.07: Ryuichi Sakamoto, *Seeing Sound, Hearing Time*.

Figure 4.08: Thomas Heatherwick, *Seed Cathedral*.

4. Methodological approach

4.4 Methodological Overview

Together, these approaches constitute an iterative, process-driven research methodology, wherein design and development are progressively shaped through a cycle of interpretation, testing and reflection. This research does not aim to produce a single, fixed outcome, but rather to develop an embodied, narrative spatial language that reconfigures the literary experience into an immersive and emotionally resonant environment.

5. Concept

Phase 1.0 Light as an Experiential Medium

This project began as an open-ended exploration of light as an experiential and spatial medium, rather than treating it as a predefined narrative tool. At this initial stage, the aim was not to produce definitive design outcomes, but to test how light creates atmosphere, perception and emotional ambiguity within a space.

Drawing upon the phenomenological approach outlined in the methodological framework, these preliminary studies position light as something to be experienced through the body, rather than merely observed as a purely visual element. Through photographic observations and material experiments (Figs. 5.01–5.03), I explored how variations in light intensity, angle and reflection alter the perception of space. These tests reveal that even subtle variations in lighting conditions can generate a sense of depth, instability and ambiguity, suggesting that space can be shaped through atmosphere rather than form alone.



Figure 5.01: Sunset light illuminating an interior space.

Figure 5.02: Study of a unique formation of light within interior space.

Figure 5.03: Shadows of leaves cast on a white wall.

As a spatial designer, this phase embodies a material-driven mode of inquiry, in which understanding emerges through iterative making and testing. By employing translucent materials and layered imagery (Fig. 5.04-5.07), I experimented with printing on butter paper, allowing light to pass through, diffuse, and partially obscure visual information. These layered conditions introduced a sense of fragmentation and uncertainty, rendering the images no longer static but fluid, shifting with changes in light and perspective. This resonates with the broader literary practice of this project, wherein literature is viewed as an object to be interpreted and reconstructed, rather than a directly presented entity.



Figure 5.04: Exploration of the ambiguous aesthetics of light.

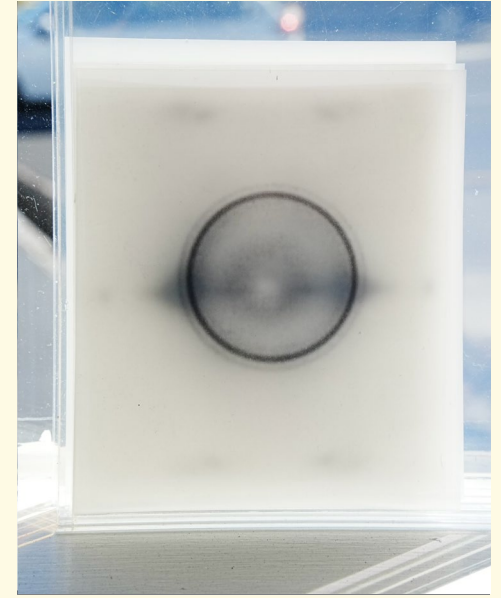


Figure 5.05-07: Extended study of the ambiguous aesthetics of light.

Subsequent experiments extended to the printmaking process (Fig. 5.08), utilising black, white and orange tones to explore the relationship between shadows, cool-toned light and warm tones. The textures produced through these processes begin to suggest how light can be indirectly visualised through its effects on surfaces and perception. These studies do not convey fixed meanings, but rather emphasise the interaction between interpretation and perception, which resonates with the semiotic and experiential frameworks discussed in the literature review.



Figure 5.08: Material-based printmaking experiments exploring how different textures simulate the projection, refraction, and distortion of light in space.



Figure 5.09: Exploration of emotional expression through light and space using coloured acrylic panels to refract vibrant light and shadow.

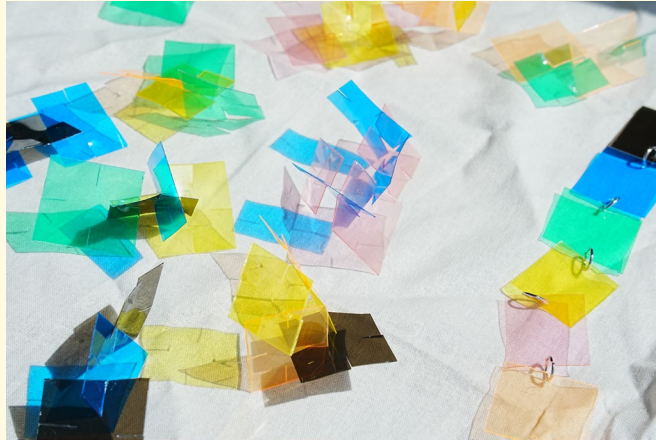


Figure 5.10: Study of layered and conflicting emotions represented through coloured light refraction in space.

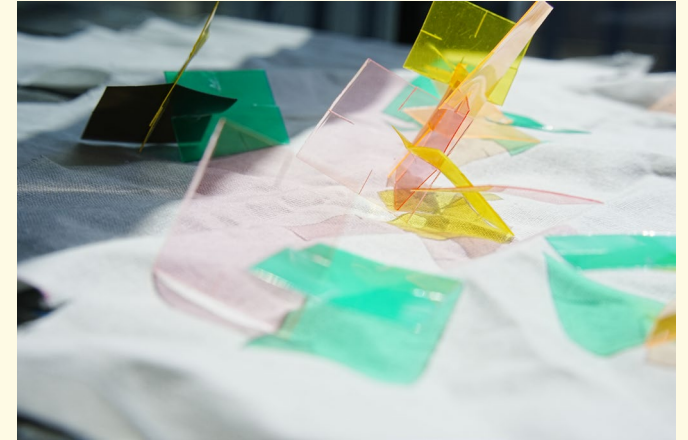


Figure 5.11: Investigation of colour, light, and spatial atmosphere as tools for emotional and narrative expression.

Early spatial proposals (Figs. 5.12-5.17) tested circular and linear configurations, utilising light to organise the rhythm and flow of space. At this stage, these configurations should be regarded as exploratory frameworks rather than finalised design strategies. Whilst they began to reveal how atmosphere constructs spatial experience, they also exposed certain limitations, particularly a tendency to rely excessively on light as the primary narrative device.



Figure 5.12: Circular exhibition space design where books are displayed on individual columns, representing the author's early, middle, and late works.

Figure 5.13: Spatial study of a circular book display system.

Figure 5.14: Exploration of individual column-based book display structures within an exhibition space.

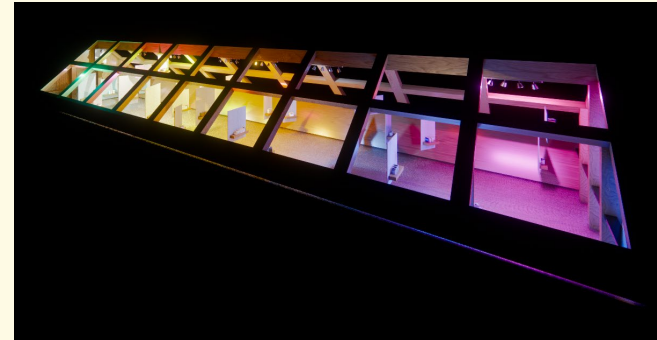


Figure 5.15: Exhibition lighting design mapping different stages of the author's creative development, arranged from left to right as early, middle, and late phases.

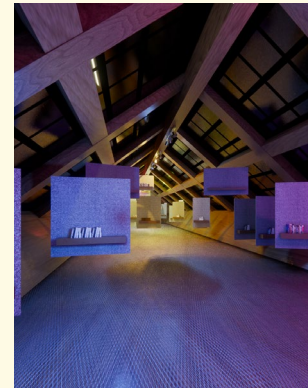


Figure 5.16: Spatial atmosphere study.



Figure 5.17: Integrated lighting and spatial composition study of the exhibition environment.

This realisation proved crucial for the subsequent phases of the project. Whilst light remained a vital component, it became evident that it alone could not sustain the complexity of the emotional and narrative conditions I sought to explore. This prompted me to turn, in later stages, towards integrating other elements, such as materials, structure and symbolic systems.

Crucially, this phase forms part of a broader iterative process that will ultimately lead to the formation of the final 'moment'. The exploration of the ambiguities surrounding light, perception and atmosphere established here continues to influence subsequent decisions, even as the project moves beyond the scope of light as the sole focal point.

5. Concept

Phase 2.0 From Biographical Narrative to Spatial Framework

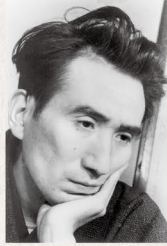
Following an initial exploration of light as a narrative medium, this project has entered its second phase, shifting its focus from ‘literature as text’ to ‘literature as a way of life’. I no longer regard writing as content to be displayed, but instead engage with Osamu Dazai’s works through embodied and interpretative perspectives, allowing spatial concepts to emerge naturally through reading, drawing and imagination.

This phase should be regarded as a transitional research framework rather than a finalised design proposal. It bridges the gap between contextual research and spatial practice, allowing narrative, embodiment and spatial thinking to resonate for the first time.

From Chronological Sequence to State of Being

The initial attempt adopted a chronological structure, using variations in light and atmosphere to divide Osamu Dazai’s life into early, middle and late periods. However, this model soon revealed its limitations.

Dazai’s writings, particularly “*No Longer Human*” (Dazai, 2023), do not unfold as a stable, linear narrative, but rather as a fragmented, subjective account shaped by memory, performance and emotional instability. As a first-person text, its relationship with reality remains perpetually ambiguous, oscillating between confession and construction. In light of this, this project no longer treats biography as a chronological sequence, but rather transforms psychological and emotional states into the driving force of the space.



Osamu Dazai Biography 1909-1948

He grew up with a mindset that was at odds with the educational and social rules of the time, which led to his inability to integrate into the collective, often feeling lonely, sad, and vulnerable. In order to cover up this side, he often plays the character of pleasing others in front of everyone, making people around him think he is funny and naive.

After reading the works of his idol, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Dazai was deeply influenced and began to write short stories. At this time, he was full of confidence in his own work, and even a little bit arrogant.

For Dazai, words were his safest haven. He put his inner thoughts and feelings into words and sought solace through writing, as his inner loneliness was always with him.



Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Dazai



Mitsuko Tanabe

Second suicide attempt

Dazai was betrayed by his close friends, who incited the literary world and journalists to suppress him, accusing him of bringing negative influence to the society through his works. This storm of public opinion tarnished his reputation, insulted and denigrated his character, and plunged him into deeper despair. Eventually, under tremendous psychological pressure, he experienced a second suicide attempt.

After being saved from two suicides, Dazai began to have a deeper understanding of the tragedy of his life. He believed that he had come to this path because he lacked the ability to say no to others - his cowardice prevented him from saying no to their demands, fearing that his refusal would hurt others but ultimately himself.

However, this realisation did not bring true relief. In the following years, he meets more and more fans who admire him, and together with them, he is on the verge of self-destruction, with several suicide attempts, as if he were drowning in an unrelenting destiny.

As his tuberculosis worsened, Osamu Dazai became exhausted, often vomiting blood, and finally ended his life by throwing himself into the water with his mistress, Tomie Yamazaki, at Tamagawa Kamimizu in the middle of the night on 13 June 1948.

First suicide attempt

However, he was deeply disappointed to find that these words of criticism did not change society or resonate with the public. Coupled with the influence of his idol, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, who ended his life by committing suicide, he began to think of following in his idol's footsteps. These two reasons eventually led to his first suicide attempt.

After living with Mitsuko Tanabe, a married woman, for three days, they attempted to commit suicide in November 1930; Dazai was saved, but Mitsuko died. Dazai was charged with 'aiding and abetting suicide', but was later acquitted. He used this as the basis for his work 'The Clown's Flower'.

1909

1926

1929

1930

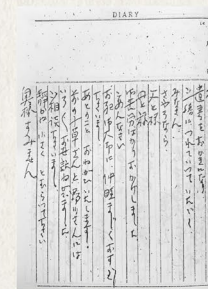
1948

His works are full of criticism of the social class gap and the flaws of the system, trying to awaken the public to the injustice of reality. Later on, Dazai broke up with his family and lost the financial support from them, and his writing could not bring him an ideal life.



Born

Osamu Dazai was born on 19 June 1909 in Kanagi Village, Kitatsugaru-gun, Aomori Prefecture. His parents had 11 children and he was the 10th child. His family was well off and he was considered a nobleman in Japan at that time.



Osamu Dazai's Last Letter



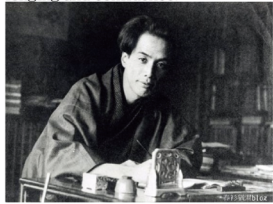
Tomie Yamazaki

Figure 5A.01: Timeline mapping key life experiences of Osamu Dazai.

Exhibition Layout Planning

Scene 2: Lighting Moments for Writing

The lighting and the colour palette of the installation turn bright and light, creating a cheerful and hopeful atmosphere that symbolises Dazai's joy at entering the world of literature. He finds writing a comforting path, and is filled with longing and confidence.



Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Dazai

Scene 3: The Blow of Reality

With the loss of the family's financial support, the original elements of luxury have gradually disappeared. This space uses installation art and lighting design to show life's ups and downs, self-doubt and disappointment. Although his works are full of criticism, they are unable to change the social status quo, leaving him in a state of confusion.

Scene 1: The Paradox of Gorgeousness and Fetteredness



The exhibition begins with a spatial design of Japanese luxury elements, supplemented by installation art symbolising the fetters, showing that although Dazai came from a wealthy family, he was unable to integrate into society due to class problems, and was filled with loneliness and sadness.

Scene 5: The Labyrinthine Dilemma

The combination of the small space and the translucent acrylic panels creates an intricate maze-like movement, symbolising his inner turmoil and struggle. The labyrinth is full of twisted paths and unrecognisable exits, just like his state of mind and life at that time. He is betrayed by his best friend, denigrated by public opinion, and humiliated, which makes him even more desperate.



The Flower of the Clown
(The Flowers of Buffoonery)

Scene 4: Depression and Disintegration

The space becomes small, creating a sense of oppression, and the light reflects his despair of the world. This stage symbolises his first suicide attempt, under heavy mental pressure.



No Longer Human (人間失格, Ningen Shikkaku)

Scene 6: The Space of Final Interpretation

The final scene opens up the space, using installation art and lighting design to present the situation of his final suicide. However, there is more to this scene than just sadness. For Dazai, life was a constant torment, so the space incorporates elements of hope and liberation for the viewer to interpret. Some people consider this as the end of his tragic life, while others see his death as a kind of release and transcendence. The exhibition leaves an open narrative space for each audience to feel and interpret Dazai's life and ending according to their own understanding.

1948



Good Bye



Villon's Wife (ヴィヨンの妻 [Viyon no tsuma])



The Setting Sun (斜陽, Shayō)

Figure 5A.02:Exhibition concept plan integrating Osamu Dazai's life narrative with selected works from different creative stages.

In light of this, this project no longer treats biography as a chronological sequence, but rather transforms psychological and emotional states into the driving force of the space.

The design no longer asks ‘what happened’, but begins to inquire:

➡ What does it feel like to be in this state?

This shift aligns with the research question, repositioning exhibition design as a mode of ‘embodied translation’ rather than mere ‘presentation’.

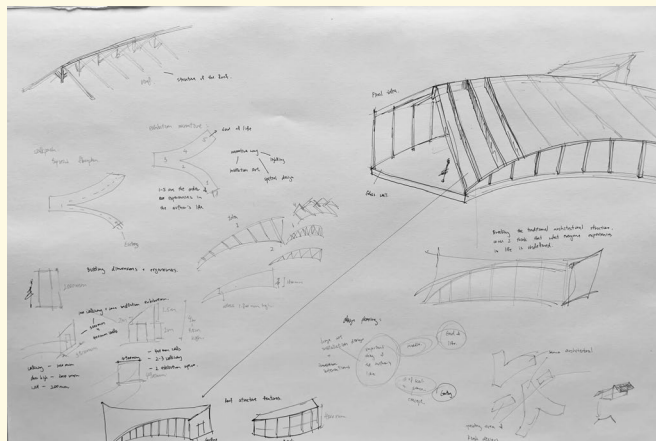


Figure 5A.03: Sketch of the design conception process.

Kanji as Conceptual Structure

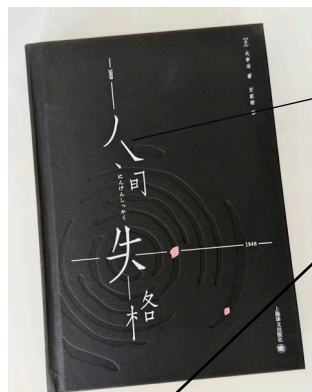
The key conceptual breakthrough at this stage lies in employing the book’s title, “*No Longer Human*” (人間失格), as a spatial framework.

These four Kanji characters are no longer viewed as linguistic units, but are reinterpreted as emotional and spatial states:

- 人 (human) — existence, embodiment
- 間 (in-between) — the tension between the self and society
- 失 (loss) — disintegration, erosion
- 格 (structure/norm) — systems of control

On an architectural level, this project explores the form of ‘human’ as a spatial structure, placing visitors within the constructed context of ‘being human’ rather than positioning them as external observers.

This marks a significant shift in my design thinking: As a spatial designer, I have begun to view language as a generator of space, rather than merely as information.



No Longer Human (人間失格, Ningen Shikkaku)

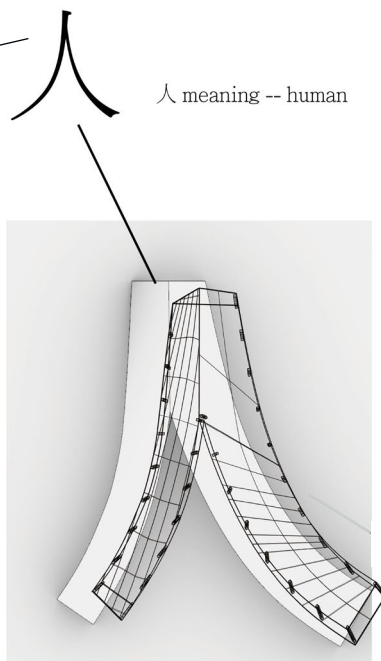
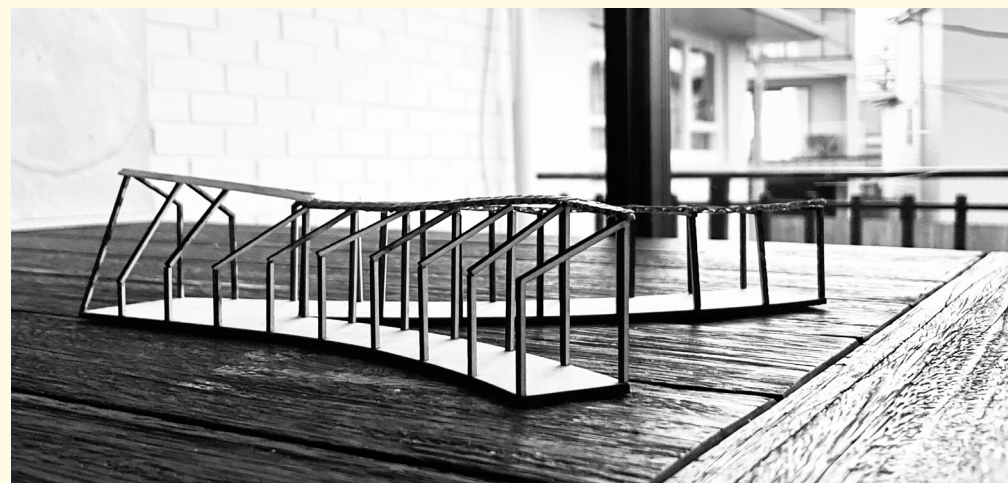
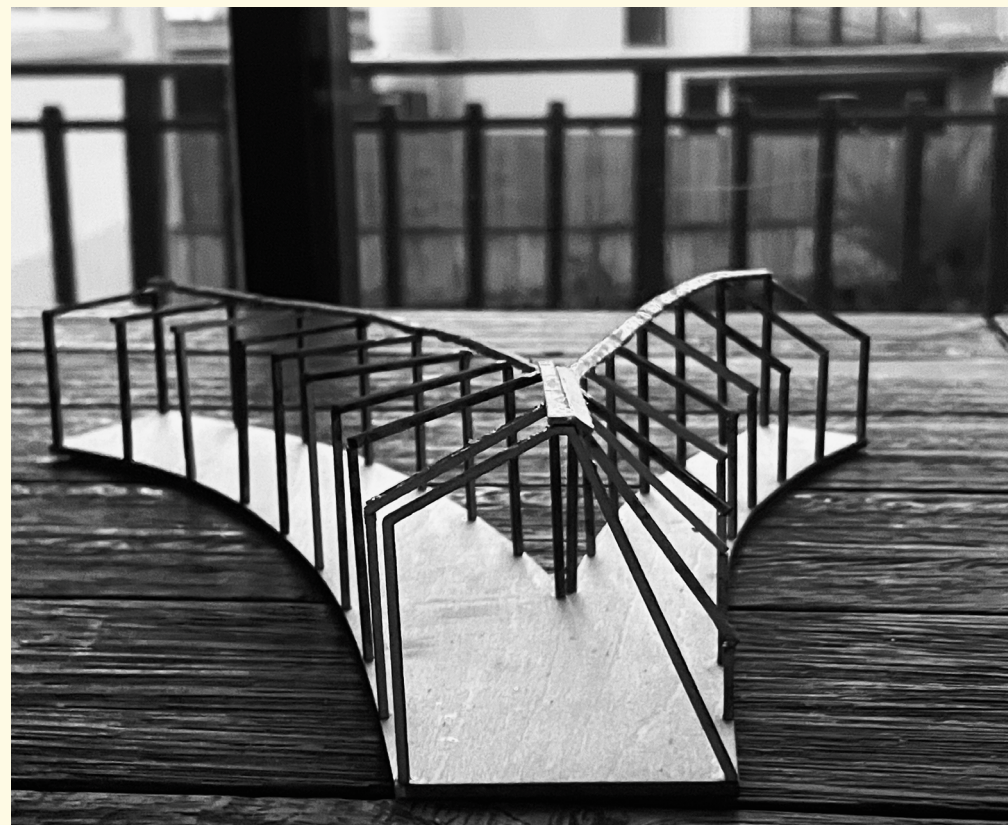


Figure 5A.04: Top view of the architectural form derived from the kanji 人 ('human') from No Longer Human.

Figures 5A.05-06: Prototype of the kanji structure.



5. Concept

Phase 3.0 Five Scenes as an Experiential System

Building upon the framework of kanji, this project has evolved into a series of five spatial scenarios. These scenarios should not be understood as a linear narrative sequence, but rather as an exploratory system designed to test how emotional states can be spatialised.

Each scenario translates a distinct state: stress, hope, collapse, fragmentation and release, into forms of space, materiality and atmosphere.

Crucially, this phase is intended as design research rather than the presentation of an outcome. It enables the different methodologies outlined previously: phenomenology, semiotics and experience design, to be tested through spatial proposals.



Figure 5B.01: New exhibition layout planning.

人間失格 (No Longer Human)

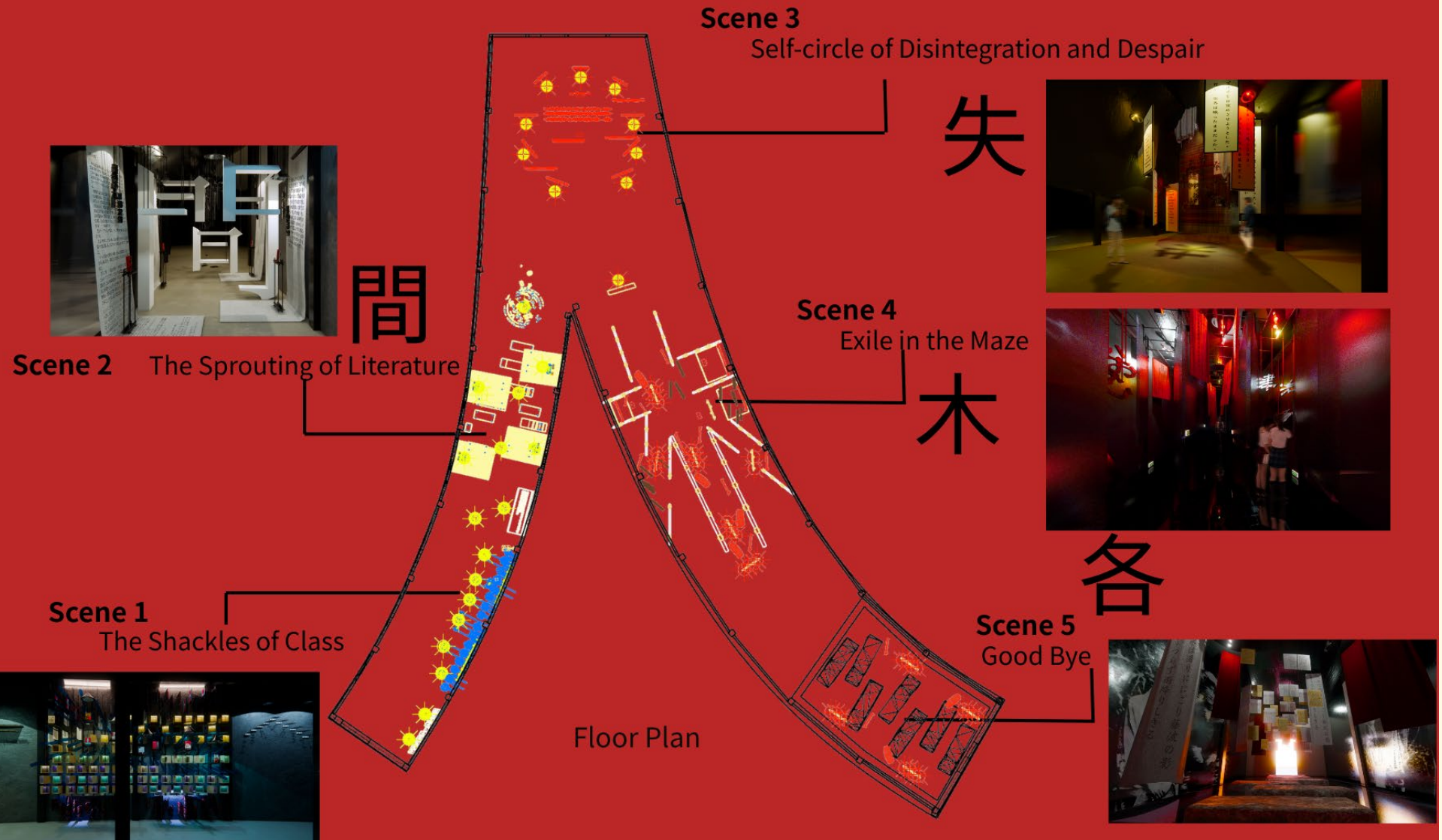


Figure 5B.02: The narrative thread of the kanji '人間失格'.

Scene one – The Shackles of Class

The first scene establishes the central contradiction of Dazai's life: material privilege coexisting with profound psychological confinement. Born into a wealthy family yet alienated by rigid class structures, Dazai experienced social hierarchy as a form of invisible violence.

This paradox is spatialised through installation and material experimentation.

This installation explores class as a psychological state characterised by pressure and distortion.

Material experiments involving stretched membranes, layered imagery and tension systems (Figs. 5B.03-04) reveal how visibility can be rendered unstable. The body becomes blurred, fragmented and difficult to locate. This effect shifts from visual distortion to a sense of physical discomfort.

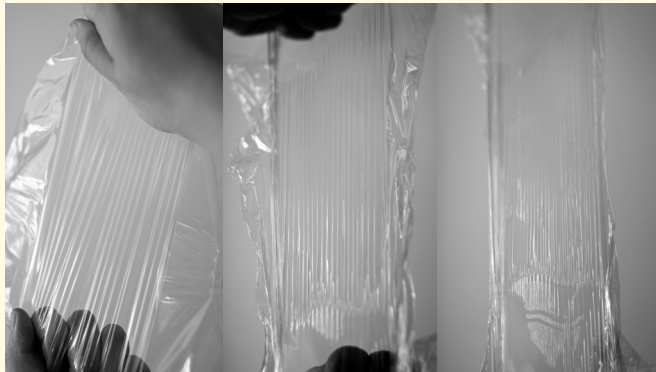
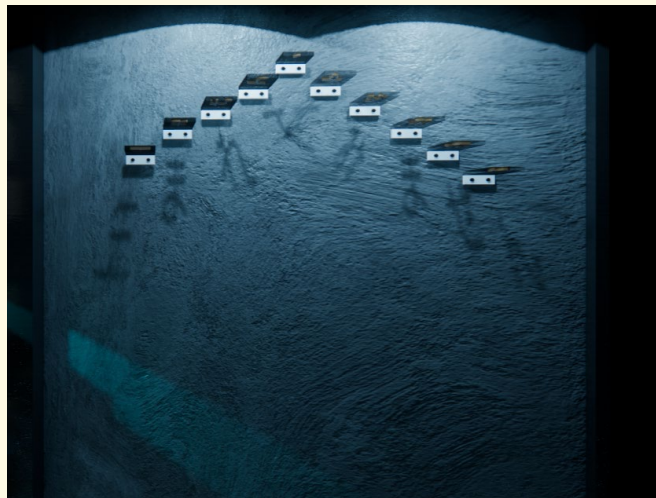


Figure 5B.03: The process of the stretch film being stretched from above and below.

Figure 5B.04: The experiment 2.0 of stretch film.

Here, I begin to transcend the realm of representation. Influenced by the installation practices of artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Thomas Heatherwick, the design focus shifts from depicting class to generating pressure.

Vertical elements, compressed spaces and controlled lighting combine to create an environment that must be physically navigated. Visitors do not merely observe the class hierarchy, they experience its weight first-hand.



Beginning of scene one

生れて、すみません。
Sorry for my existence. (太宰治, 1975)



Figure 5B.05: The statement reflecting Dazai's denial of self.

Figure 5B.06: Scene One class lighting installation.

Figure 5B.07: The rods symbolise the invisible damage caused by class norms.



Figure 5B.08: Scene One Render.

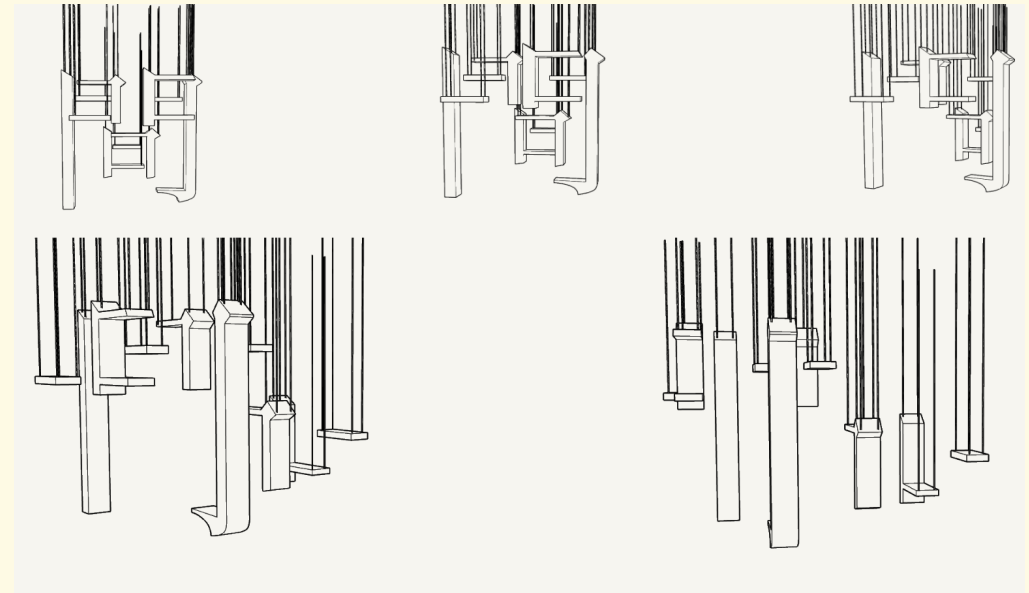
Scene Two – Literary Sprout

In Scene Two, the spatial atmosphere shifts from the oppressive darkness of the previous scene to a warmer, more luminous one. This transition reflects Osamu Dazai's early belief in literature as a means of connection and redemption. Writing is framed not as a profession, but as a fragile attempt to establish dialogue with the world.

The second scene presents a state of temporary openness.

The space is structured around the concept of '間' (interstice), composed of scattered linear elements that only form a coherent whole through movement (Fig. 5B.09). Visitors find themselves within the gaps between these elements, personally experiencing a state of 'being in between'.

The kanji 「間」 (read as *kan* in Japanese and *jiān* in Chinese) is composed of two elements: 「門」 (gate) and 「日」 (sun or light). This composition carries a deeply symbolic meaning. The gate signifies boundaries, confinement, and social constraints, while the sun represents hope, time, and vitality. When light is enclosed within a gate, it becomes 「間」 —a suspended state of being neither fully inside nor fully outside.



Beyond its graphic structure, 「間」 holds multiple-layered meanings in both Japanese and Chinese contexts:

Figure 5B.09: Different perspectives of 「間」.

Spatial distance and intervals (rooms, gaps, separation),

Temporal pauses (moments, intermissions),

Interpersonal space (relationships, estrangement),

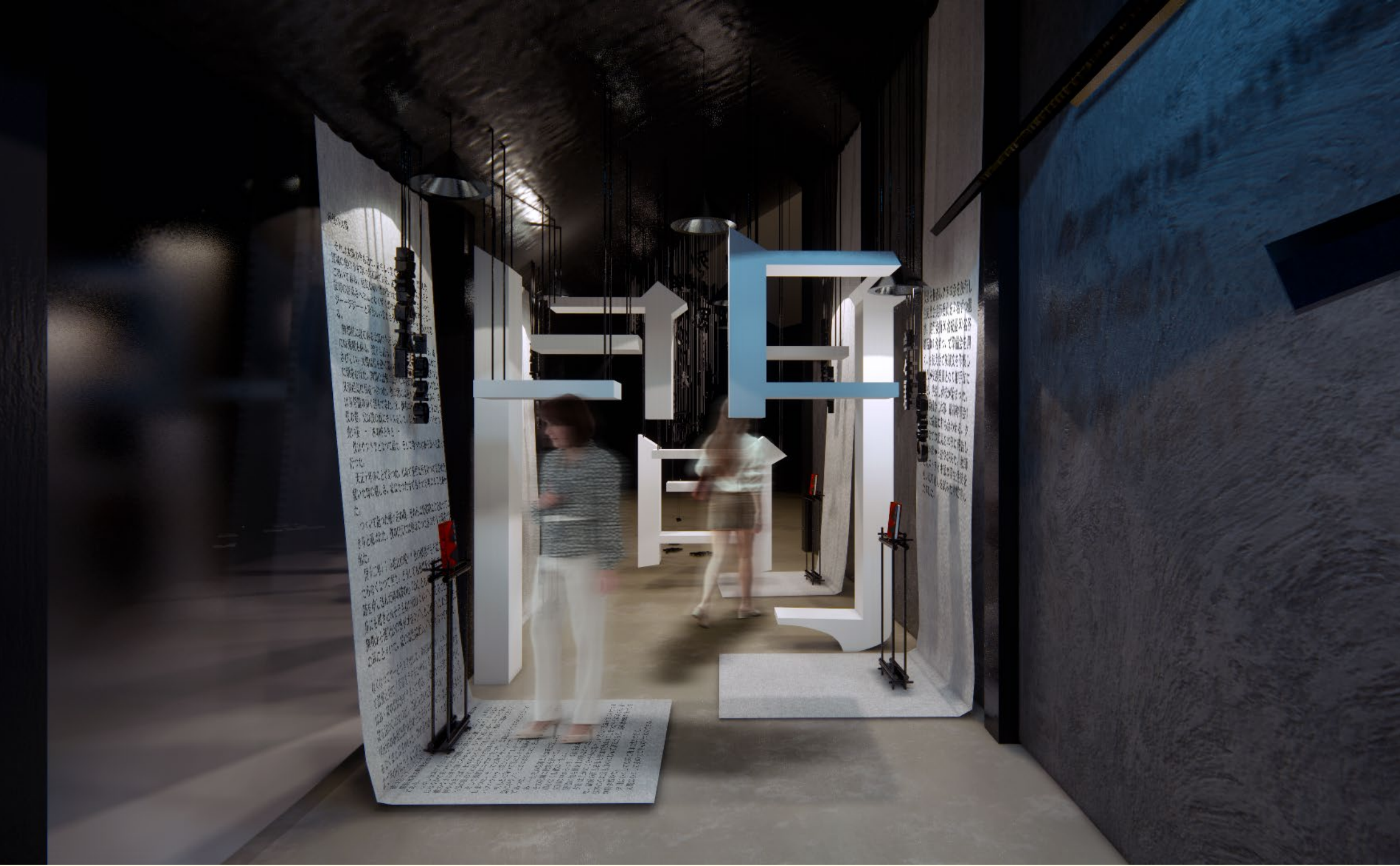


Figure 5B.10: Scene Two Render.

Literary Presence and Emotional Transition

Four suspended fabric panels present early works by Dazai (Figs. 5B.11):

1929 *The Last Drum* 最後の太閤 (太宰治, 2023)

1930 *Student Group* 学生群 (太宰治, 1930)

1936 *The Train* 列車 (太宰治, 1936)

1937 *A Thoughtful Failure* 思案の敗北 (太宰治, 1937)

These texts reflect recurring themes of identity, resistance, and isolation.



Figure 5B.11: suspended fabric panels displaying early works by Osamu Dazai.

Dissolution of Ideals

Toward the end of the scene, suspended textual elements gradually descend in height, becoming increasingly sparse (Fig. 5B.12). Inspired by Chiharu Shiota, language shifts from structure to fragmentation.

This transition marks the instability of Dazai's early idealism. Words lose coherence, and spatial order begins to dissolve, preparing for the emotional descent of the following scene.

Here, my creative approach as a spatial designer becomes more precise: No longer merely assembling objects, but beginning to design the relationships between the body, movement and perception.

Light no longer carries symbolic meaning, it becomes a contextual presence, appearing and disappearing depending on one's position.



Figure 5B. 12: End of Scene Two.

Scene Three – Self-Circle of Disintegration and Despair

This scene marks a turning point from tension to disintegration.

Scene 3 marks a rupture in Osamu Dazai's psychological trajectory. As literature fails to reconcile reality, the ideals that once sustained him begin to collapse. What follows is not a sudden break, but a gradual and repetitive process of self-negation.

In contrast to the preceding scene, the spatial atmosphere shifts toward coldness and compression. The environment narrows, light is restrained, and movement becomes increasingly constrained. The space does not offer release; instead, it sustains a continuous state of tension, suggesting a psychological loop without resolution.

The character '失' (loss) is spatialised through repetition, projection and saturation. Red light dominates, not as warmth, but as a form of compression. Language fractures into isolated statements, dissolving the narrative's continuity.

The space does not guide interpretation but creates a cyclical state, causing visitors to encounter instability amidst a sense of insolubility.

This reflects a crucial methodological shift:

**from narrative communication
➡ towards the accumulation of emotion.**

Fragmented Voice

Six suspended panels present fragments of inner monologue, in both English and Japanese. These texts are not explanatory, but residual, partial thoughts that remain unresolved.

“I tried to awaken the world with my words, but the world remained asleep.”

言葉で世界を目覚めさせようとした。だが、世界は眠ったままだった。

“When ideals collapse, all that remains is the self—and relentless doubt.”

理想が崩れた後に残ったのは、自分自身と尽きぬ疑念だけ。

“Words could not change reality. And slowly, my heart began to break.”

言葉では現実を変えられなかった。心は少しずつ崩れていった。

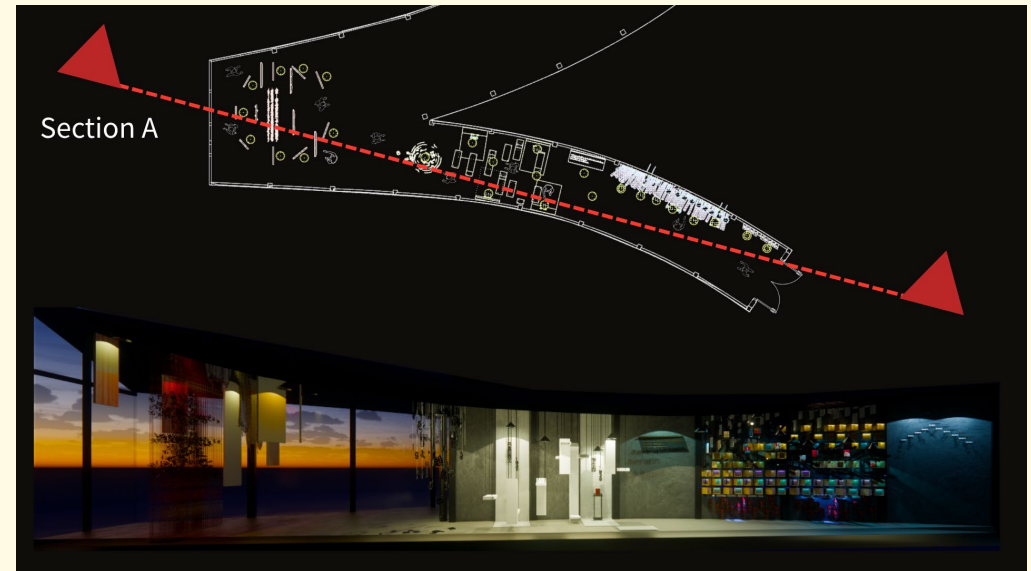


Figure 5B.13: Section of three scenes.

Figure 5B.14: Scene Three Render.



Figure 5B.15: Scene Three Render 2.

Scene Four – Exile in the Maze

The fourth act focuses on Osamu Dazai's middle years, a period marked by emotional instability, public scrutiny, and profound psychological fragmentation. By this stage, Dazai is no longer merely struggling internally; his collapse is accelerated by external hostility, betrayal, and public humiliation. The space is conceived as a continuously shifting maze, an environment of disorientation and confinement that reflects both social exile and internal disintegration.

This scene corresponds to the character 「格」 (structure, standard, frame), 「木」 (wood) derived from the radical , which historically suggests frameworks, rules, and systems of containment.

Translating this linguistic structure into spatial form, the maze is organised around a 「木」 shaped circulation pattern.



Figure 5B.16: The most hopeful and destructive scenes in Dazai's life form a stark contrast.

Translucent materials, reflections and overlapping pathways create a sense of disorientation. Though visible, the boundaries are unstable, causing visual fields to overlap and perception to fragment accordingly.

External sounds, embedded in the form of suspended text, function more as atmospheric pressure than as legible content.

Here, semiotics is transformed into spatiality:

Meaning is not deciphered sequentially, but encountered as scattered signals within the environment.

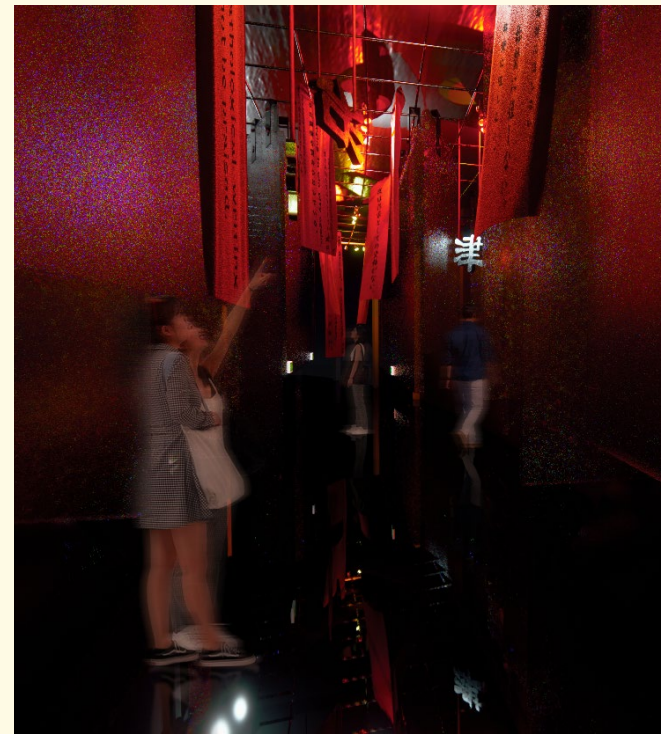
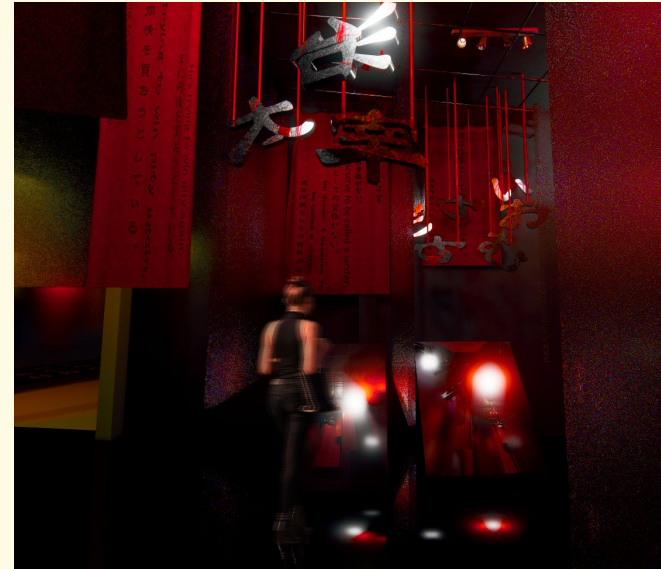


Figure 5B.17: Names of Osamu Dazai suspended and bound with red threads, symbolising the erasure and fragmentation of identity under social pressure.

Figure 5B.18: Suspended red fabric strips printed with hostile voices.



Figure 5B.19: external hostility and public condemnation directed at Osamu Dazai.

Scene Five – Goodbye

The final act concludes the spatial sequence and reflects the death of Osamu Dazai. Rather than presenting a purely tragic ending, the space shifts from enclosure toward openness. Death is framed not only as an end, but as a release from prolonged tension and exhaustion.

Fragmentation of 「各」

This scene corresponds to the character 「各」, suggesting fragmentation and dispersal. Identity no longer holds as a unified condition, but breaks into separate and unresolved parts.

The space does not offer resolution. Instead, it sustains ambiguity, leaving the meaning of this final moment open to interpretation.

Water, reflections and suspended fabric collectively construct a space defined by instability and tranquillity. Movement slows, and the body becomes increasingly attuned to balance and the present moment.

This space does not bring the narrative to a close, but rather sustains a sense of ambiguity. Death is not presented as an ending, but as a threshold between different states.



Figure 5B.20: Final scene where the spatial sequence transitions from enclosure to openness, framing death as both an ending and a potential release, open to interpretation.



Figure 5B.21: Suspended red and white fabric with inscribed text creates a tension between death and purity, expressing emotional conflict and quiet resolution in the final spatial atmosphere.

Iterative Translation and Objectspace Adaptation

As this phase progressed, specific elements from the five scenes were selected and further tested through small-scale exhibition settings. This required abstracting and reconfiguring the spatial concepts, transforming them into more refined installation works.

Rather than reconstructing the entire architectural system, I shifted my focus to individual components: suspended lines, layered images, and distortions created by light and shadow, allowing fragments of the work to function independently.

This process became a significant opportunity for reflection. It revealed that the project did not rely entirely on the overall spatial framework; on the contrary, the individual elements themselves possessed the capacity to carry emotional and narrative weight.

As a spatial designer, this has transformed my creative approach. I have begun to shift my focus away from the complete environment as the central axis of my thinking, and instead place greater emphasis on how atmosphere, materials and light can create intense tension within a single context.

The five scenes in Objectspace:



Figure 5B.22: Scene One in Objectspace.

Figure 5B.23: Scene Two in Objectspace.

Figure 5B.24: Scene Three in Objectspace.



Figure 5B.25: Scene Four in Objectspace.



Figure 5B.26: Scene Five in Objectspace.



Figure 5B.27: Scene Five in Objectspace.

Stage Reflection: From System to Focus

Although the five-act structure and the ‘人’ character framework have been highly developed, they remain merely transitional constructs rather than definitive solutions.

This phase marked the first integration of

- literary interpretation,
- spatial narrative,
- and immersive experience into a coherent system.

At the same time, its limitations became increasingly apparent. The multiplicity of scenes began to dilute emotional tension, whilst the scale of the architectural proposals raised questions regarding their adaptability across different exhibition contexts.

These tensions prompted a pivotal shift in direction. Rather than extending the narrative across multiple spaces, the project moved towards compression and condensation, seeking a single moment in which multiple emotional states could coexist.

This shift laid the foundation for the project’s final phase.

5. Concept

Phase 4: Final Concept – The Firework as a Condensed Spatial Moment

From Narrative Sequence to Spatial Concentration

Following the development of the five-scene spatial framework in Phase 3, the project underwent a critical shift in direction. While the multi-scenic structure enabled a layered exploration of emotional states, it also revealed limitations in terms of spatial feasibility, narrative density, and experiential focus.

Rather than continuing to expand this sequential system, I began to rethink how to achieve intensity through compression rather than extension.

This led to a fundamental question in my design practice:
How can a single spatial moment bear the emotional weight of the entire narrative?

Consequently, the project shifted towards a condensed approach. Within this framework, the exhibition design no longer functions as a linear narrative device, but is transformed into an embodied and experiential space. This directly responds to the research question, positioning spatial design as a medium intended to stimulate embodied interaction with the literary work, rather than merely illustrating it.

Selecting the ‘Fireworks Festival’ as a Critical Moment

The final concept focuses on a specific moment within “*No Longer Human*”. Written from Dazai’s narrative perspective, this work maintains a persistent blurring of the boundaries between lived experience and literary construction.

This ambiguity is crucial.

I do not view this moment as a factual biographical account, but rather as a perceived and imagined state encountered through reading, interpretation and spatial translation.

The chosen moment is the fireworks festival incident. During this event, Dazai was witnessed kissing a female admirer in public, with his wife and young daughter present to witness it. This seemingly fleeting moment had far-reaching consequences, exacerbating the breakdown of personal relationships and public exposure. In the aftermath, he faced criticism from the literary world and the media.

The significance of this moment lies not in its veracity but in its implications.

It converges the multiple emotional states explored in the preceding discussion:

- Social stratification and class tensions
- The longing for connection and validation
- Shame, exposure and self-denial
- Public judgment and the fragmentation of identity
- The intimate connection between life, collapse and self-destruction

Just as fireworks themselves are dazzling, excessive and fleeting, it exists as a transient yet saturated event.

It is precisely this duality of spectacle and transience that renders it a powerful spatial anchor.

Breaking the Five-Scene Framework

The turning point leading to this final concept began with an experimental installation rooted in my early explorations of class and hierarchy (Figs. 5C.01-03).

In this iteration, I introduced stacked acrylic frames, imagery of fireworks, and the symbol of the camera. These elements construct a space for observation and revelation:

- Fireworks as spectacle, privilege and exclusivity
- The camera as a symbol of surveillance, judgement and the literary gaze

The suspended windmill and cascading red ribbons extend this logic vertically, suggesting top-down social pressures. The shredded newspaper fragments on the floor, meanwhile, echo the circulation of criticism and public discourse.

This experiment marked a turning point in my design process.

- For the first time, the project broke free from structured sequences of scenes and began to explore how multiple narrative layers could coexist within a single spatial context.

As a spatial designer, this shift was crucial.

- I began to understand that the complexity of emotion need not be conveyed through spatial expansion, but can instead be constructed through superimposition, tension and simultaneity.



Figure 5C.01: Iterative development of Scene One.

Figure 5C.02: Construct a space of observation, spectacle, and judgement.

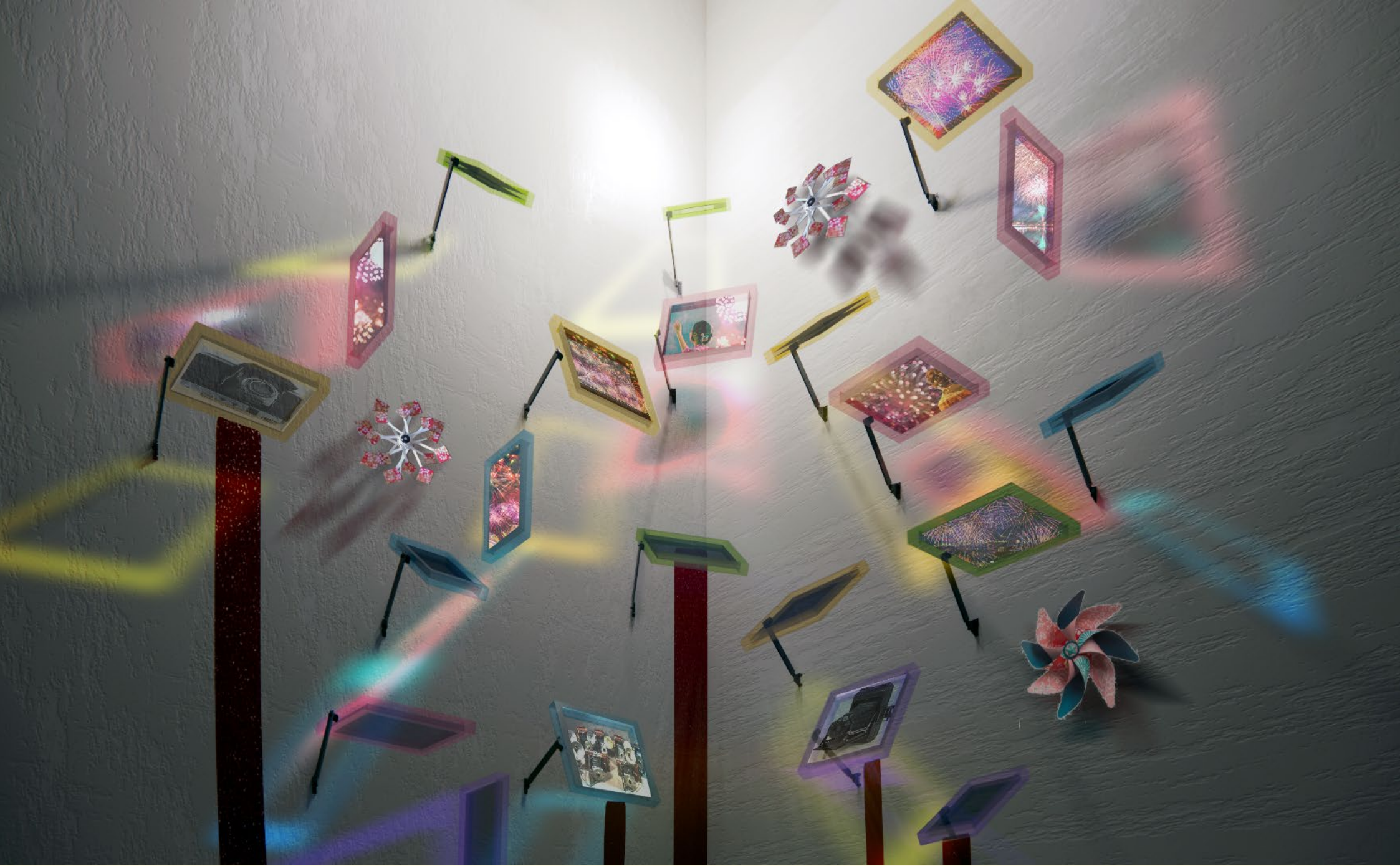


Figure 5C.03: Vertical elements articulate social pressure, surveillance, and the circulation of public discourse.

From Explosion to Suspension: Spatial Development

This direction was further developed through a series of sketches inspired by Cornelia Parker's work *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*.

Parker's suspended fragments offer a way of thinking: viewing a single moment not as something fleeting, but as an existence suspended in mid-air.

In translating this into spatial design, I began to explore fireworks, no longer viewing them as events in time, but as states frozen in space—an explosion that has never dissipated.



Figure 5C.04-07: Sketches exploring the initial concept of the 'firework moment,' investigating spatial explosion and visual fragmentation.

Early models tested suspended square frames to support elements such as flowers, mesh and glass. However, this structure was subsequently discarded. Its rigid geometry imposed a unidirectional interpretation, conflicting with the conceptual openness of the 'instant'.

The design subsequently evolved into a circular suspended frame (Fig. 5C.10), eliminating a fixed sense of orientation and allowing visitors to move freely around and beneath the installation.

This shift reflects a broader conceptual transition:

From structured narrative ➡ towards an immersive state

From linear progression ➡ towards spatial simultaneity

From viewing ➡ towards inhabiting

Material experiments as spatial investigations.

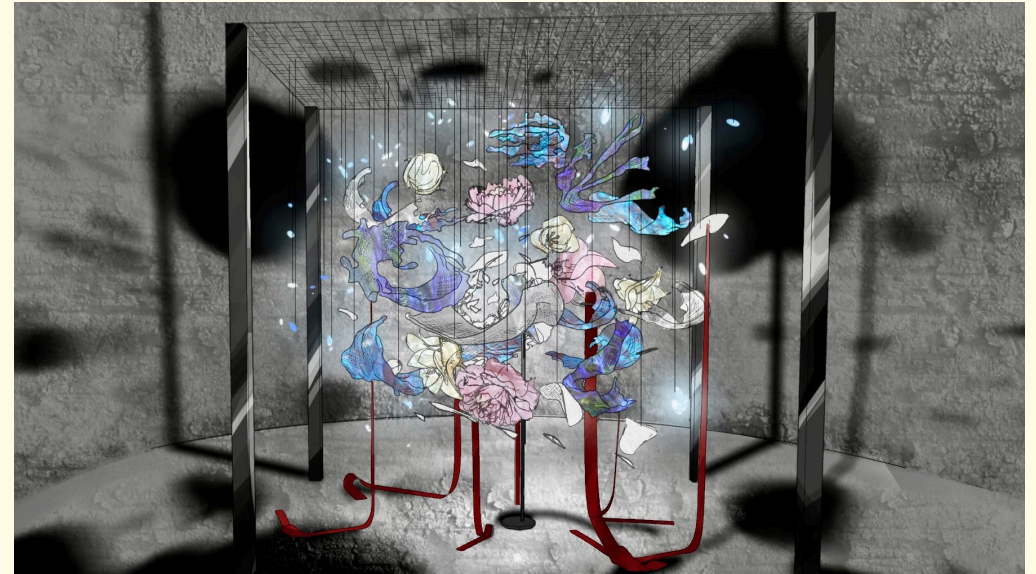


Figure 5C.08-09: Further development drawings exploring spatial and conceptual variations of the 'firework moment'.



Figure 5C.10: The circular suspended frame, eliminating a fixed sense of orientation.

Material Experimentation as Emotional Translation

Before completing the installation, I conducted a series of material experiments to explore how light interacts with glass, mesh and translucent surfaces.

These tests were not merely visual but phenomenological in nature.

They explored how materials:

- Distort visibility
- Fragment perception
- Generate unstable shadows and reflections

Through this process, I developed a material language rooted in uncertainty and instability, where meaning is not fixed but constantly shifting.

This approach embodies my stance as a spatial designer: design emerges through making, testing and perception, rather than being predetermined.

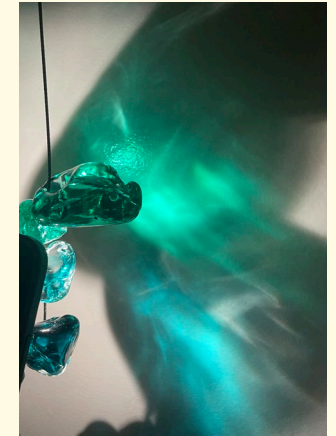
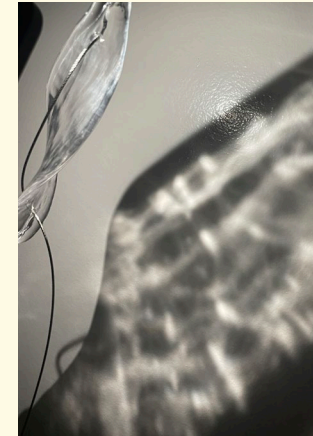
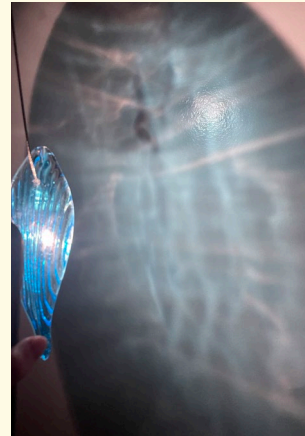


Figure 5C.11-13: Material experiments using glass of varying shapes, colours, and scales to investigate light interaction, showing how proximity to the light source affects shadow size, clarity, and texture.

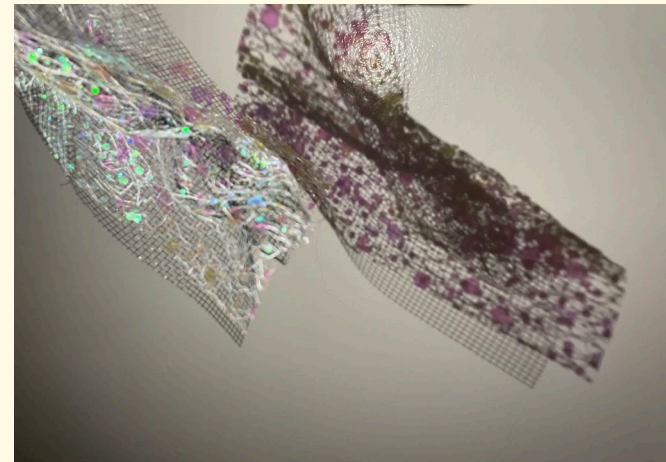
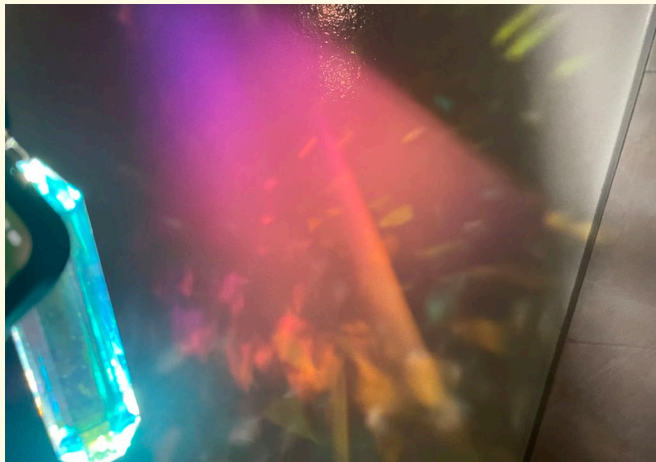
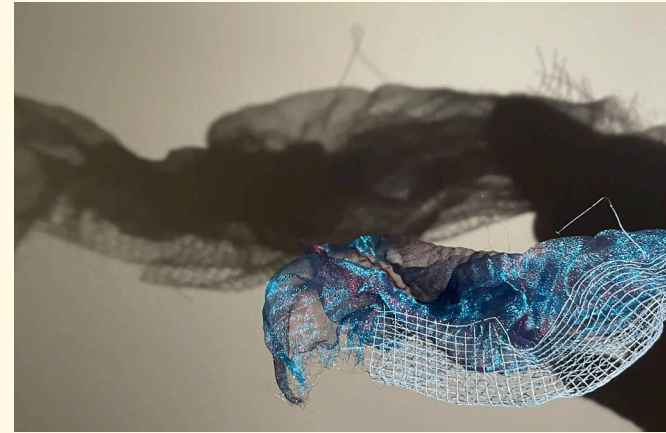
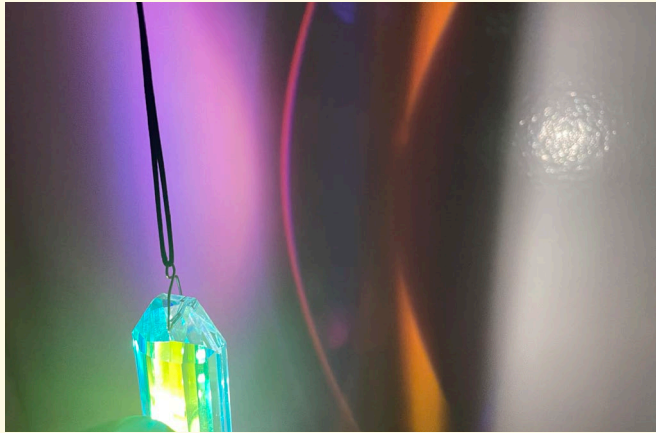


Figure 5C.14-15: Material experiment using prism glass exploring dynamic light refraction, where shifting light and movement generate continuously changing colour reflections and unstable visual effects.

Figure 5C.16-17: Material exploration combining malleable wire mesh with fabric to test light projection and shadow formation, producing varied spatial and atmospheric effects depending on material combinations.

Develop The Idea Of Installation: A Convergence of Fragments

The idea takes the form of a suspended circular structure, positioned approximately four metres above the ground. Its design is deliberately flexible, allowing it to be installed in any space provided there is sufficient vertical clearance.

Rather than presenting a sequence, this installation brings together fragments from all previous stages into a single, condensed form.

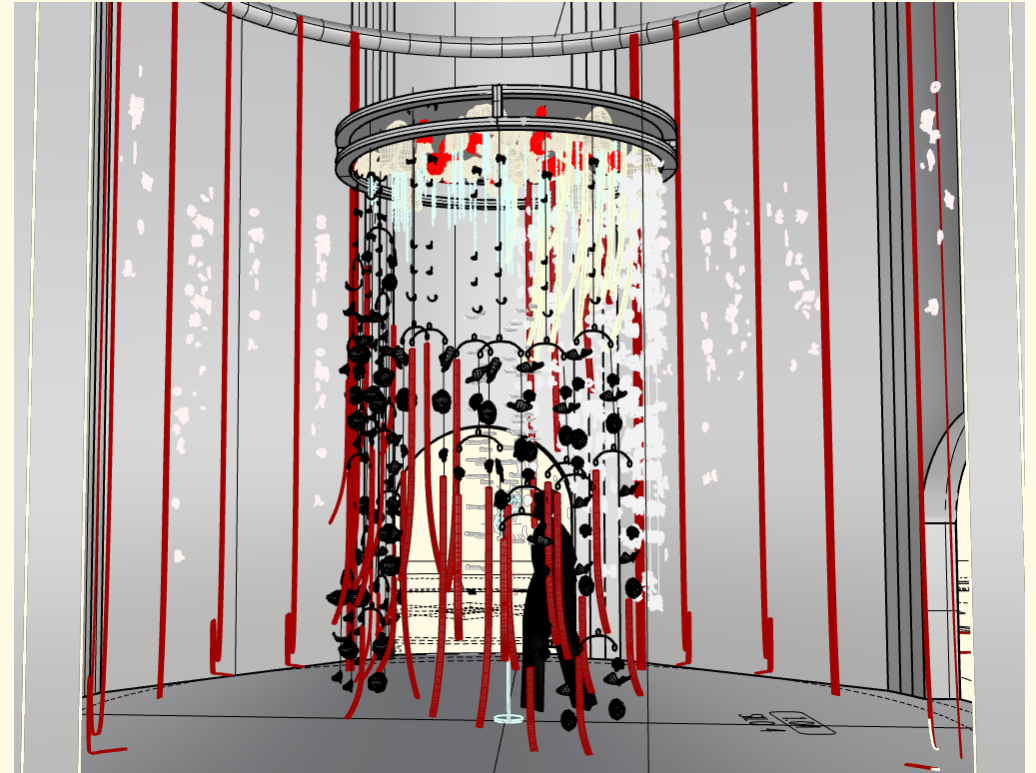
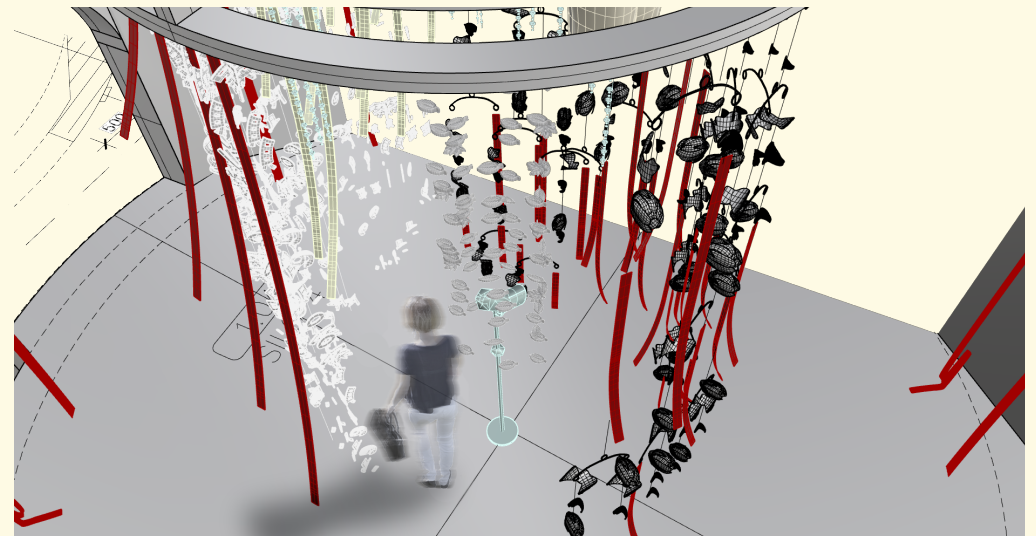


Figure 5C.18: Installation rendering presenting the resolved spatial and material system of the 'firework moment'.

5C.19. Bird's-eye view of visitors entering the installation.



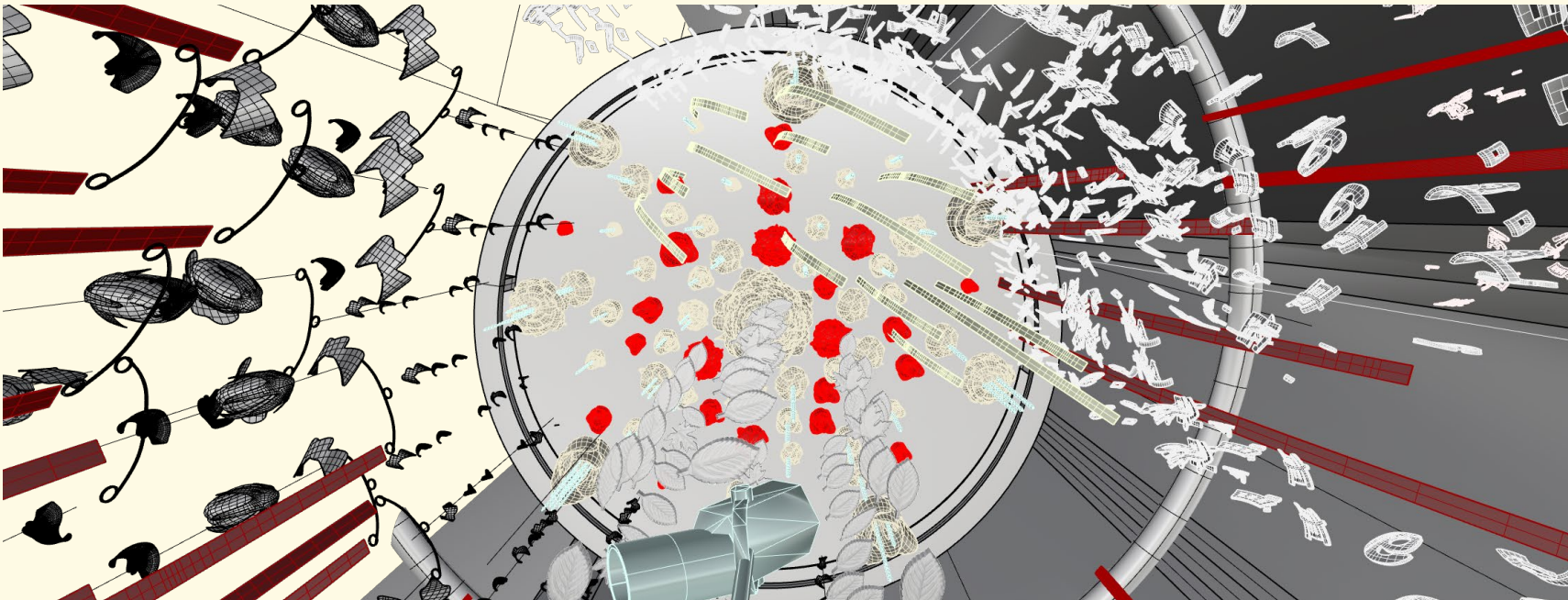
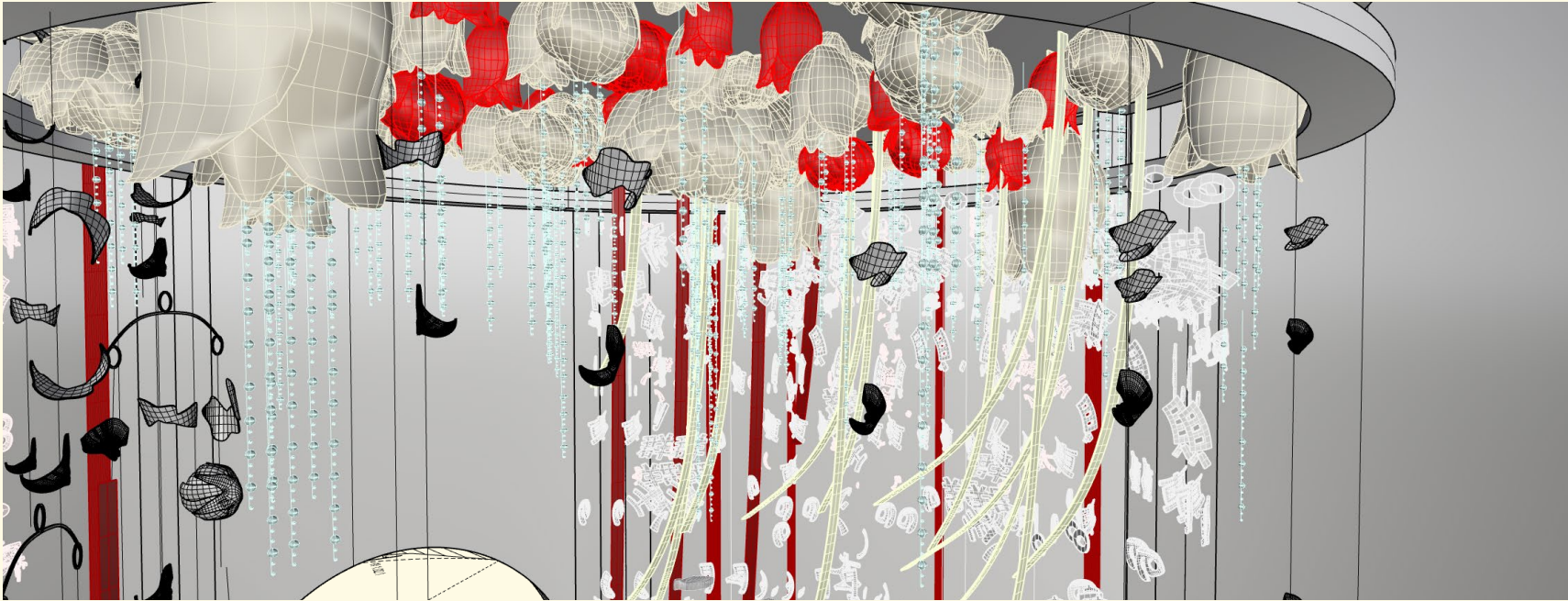


Figure 5C.20: Detail view of suspended elements.

Figure 5C.21: Interior perspective from within the installation, illustrating the viewer's spatial and visual experience of the 'firework moment'.

At its core, the installation brings together key elements distilled from the earlier five scenes:

Light

A dual-head lighting system projects in two directions, creating overlapping areas of illumination. One of these areas incorporates fluid, water-like textures, echoing the fifth scene of Phase 3—Goodbye—submersion and ultimate dissolution.

The light here is not static but temporal—constantly shifting, never fully stable.

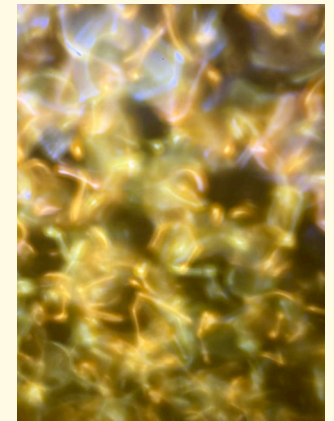
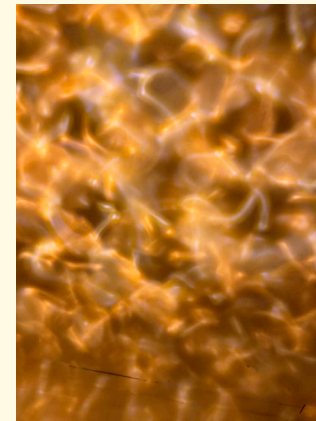
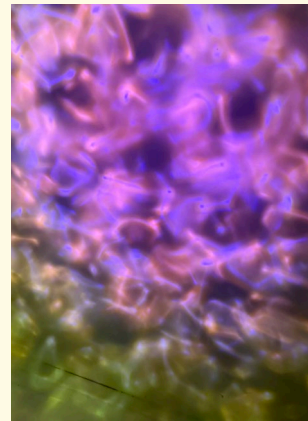
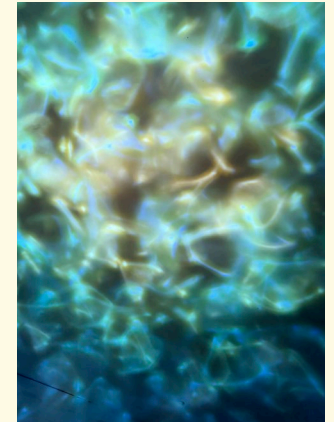
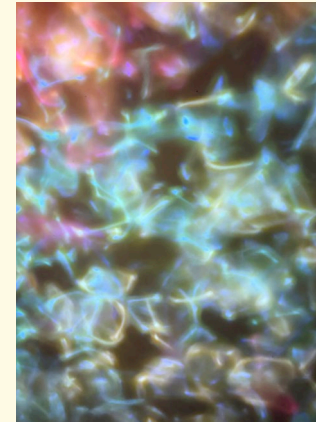
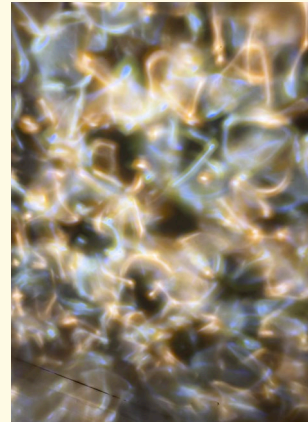


Figure 5C. 22-27: Lighting with water-like textures to explore different colours and dynamic surface effects.

Fabrics

White and red fabrics operate as opposing emotional registers:

- White evokes inner monologue, confession, and fragile introspection,
- Red represents external violence, judgment, and social hostility.

These elements directly extend the emotional language developed in Scenes Three, Four, and Five, where internal and external forces collide.

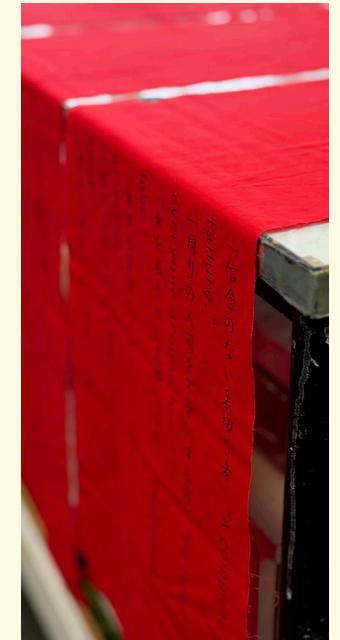
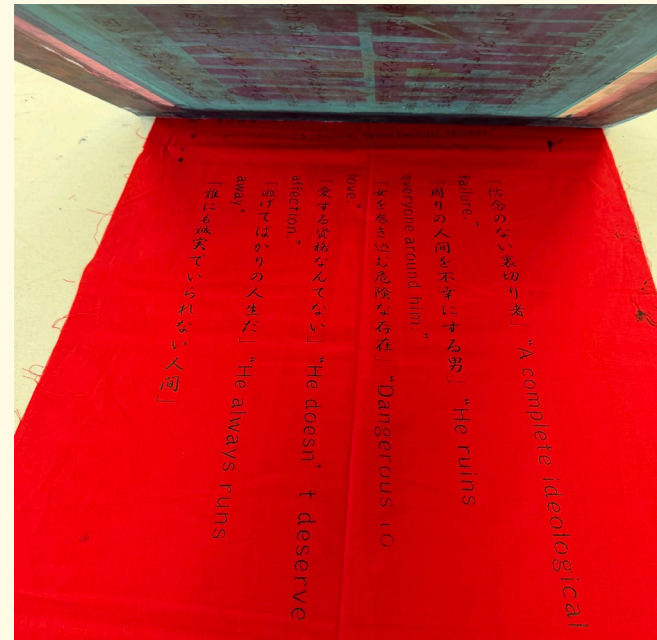
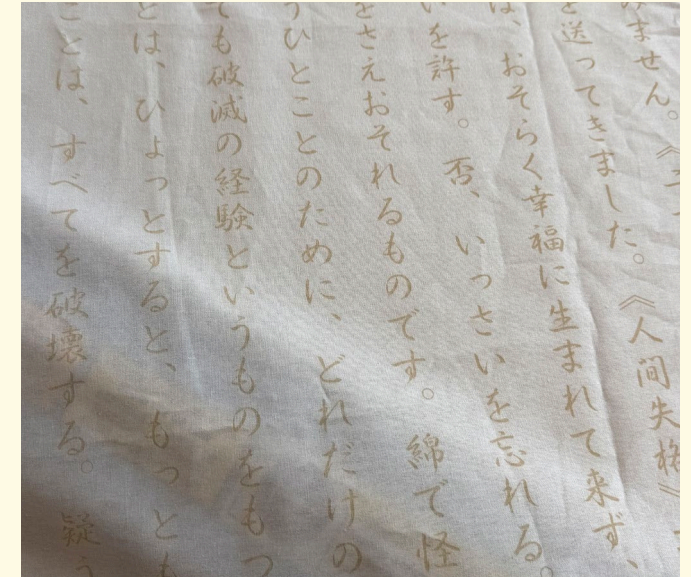
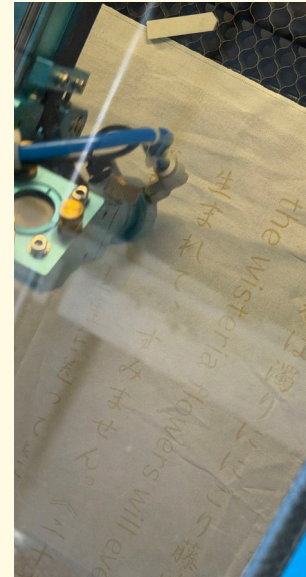


Figure 5C.28-29: Laser-cut white fabric with printed monologue text, producing burnt-like edges that evoke fragility and deterioration.

Figure 5C. 30-31: Screen-printing process on red fabric, documenting the production of text-based material elements.

Transparent acrylic letters

Suspended fragments of acrylic text echo previous explorations of language as a spatial material. These fragments, taken from the works of Osamu Dazai, appear incomplete and unexplained; their function is more akin to traces than statements.



Figure 5C. 32: Text selection for acrylic lettering.

Figure 5C. 33: Fabricated acrylic text elements.

「生まれて、すみません。(二十世紀旗手)
 己の多い生涯を送ってきました。(人間失格) 开篇
 我私という人間は、おそらく幸福に生まれて来ず、幸福に生きてゆかね性質の男であつたようだ。(晩年)
 可愛は、いっさいを許す。否、いっさいを忘れる。(斜陽)
 「弱虫は、幸福をさえおそれるものです。得て怪我するんです。幸福に傷つけられる事もあるんです。(人間失格)
 らさびしいというひとこのために、どれだけの苦心をしたか。(食学生)
 「人は、いらでも破壊の怪獣というものをもつと、そのあとは、わりあいに、しつかり生きられるものらしい。(斜陽)
 8 待つということは、ひよつとすると、もつとも積極的な、強靱な態度かもしれない。(待)
 9 信ずるということは、すべてを破壊する。疑うということは、すべてを建設する。(思考のレッスン)
 10 笑われて、笑われて、強くなる。(富蔵百景)
 11 私は、その女の、だまっている時の憂鬱な顔が好きだった。(人間失格)
 12 幸福の一秒は、不幸の一年に優る。(悪い出)
 13 この世の中の、合法的なものほど、おそろしいものはない。(バンドラの世)
 14 私は、自分が、自分自身を、まったく理解できていない。(晩年)
 15 美しい秋の日の午後でした。私は、私のすべての不幸が、この美しさに耐えられないほど大きいように感じた。(秋の午後)
 16 人は志と革命のために生まれて来たのだ。(斜陽)
 17 女人に、はじめて会った時から、死にたがっている男だと見破られないよう、注意しなければならぬ。(女性独語)
 18 天使は空より舞いおり、地にひれふして、神を讃え、黄金の杯をあげ、血の涙を流す。(思考のレッスン)
 19 私は、私自身の生涯を、私自身の手で、汚してしまつた。(悪い出)
 20 ことに、私は無力な男でした。私は、たった一つの、人間の、もつとも正当な要求さえ、どうすることもできなかった。(東京八景)
 「I'm sorry for being born.」 — Twenty Century Standard-Bearer
 「I have lived a life full of shame.」 — No Longer Human (opening line)
 「Perhaps I was a man who was not born for happiness, nor able to live happily.」 — The Late Years
 「Love forgives everything. No — it forgets everything.」 — The Setting Sun
 「Cowards even fear happiness. They can be hurt by cotton. Sometimes they are wounded by happiness itself.」 — No Longer Human
 「For the sake of the single word 'lonely,' how much effort I have suffered.」 — The Beggar Student
 「Once a person has experienced ruin, it seems they can afterward live rather firmly.」 — The Setting Sun
 「Waiting may be the most active and resilient attitude of all.」 — Waiting
 「To believe is to destroy everything. To doubt is to build everything.」 — Lessons in Thinking
 「Laughed at, laughed at — and I become stronger.」 — One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji
 「I liked the melancholy look on her face when she was silent.」 — No Longer Human
 「One second of happiness is worth more than a year of unhappiness.」 — Memories
 「Nothing is more terrifying than what is legitimate in this world.」 — Pandora's Box
 「I find myself completely unable to understand myself.」 — The Late Years
 「It was a beautiful autumn afternoon. I felt that all my unhappiness was too great to endure such beauty.」 — Autumn Afternoon
 「Human beings were born for love and for revolution.」 — The Setting Sun
 「When meeting a woman for the first time, I must be careful not to let her see that I am a man who wants to die.」 — A Woman's Soliloquy
 「An angel descends from the sky, kneels upon the earth, praises God, raises a golden cup, and sheds tears of blood.」 — Lessons in Thinking
 「I have stained my own life with my own hands.」 — Memories
 「Truly, I was a powerless man. I could not even fulfill the most rightful demand of a single human being.」 — Eight Views of Tokyo

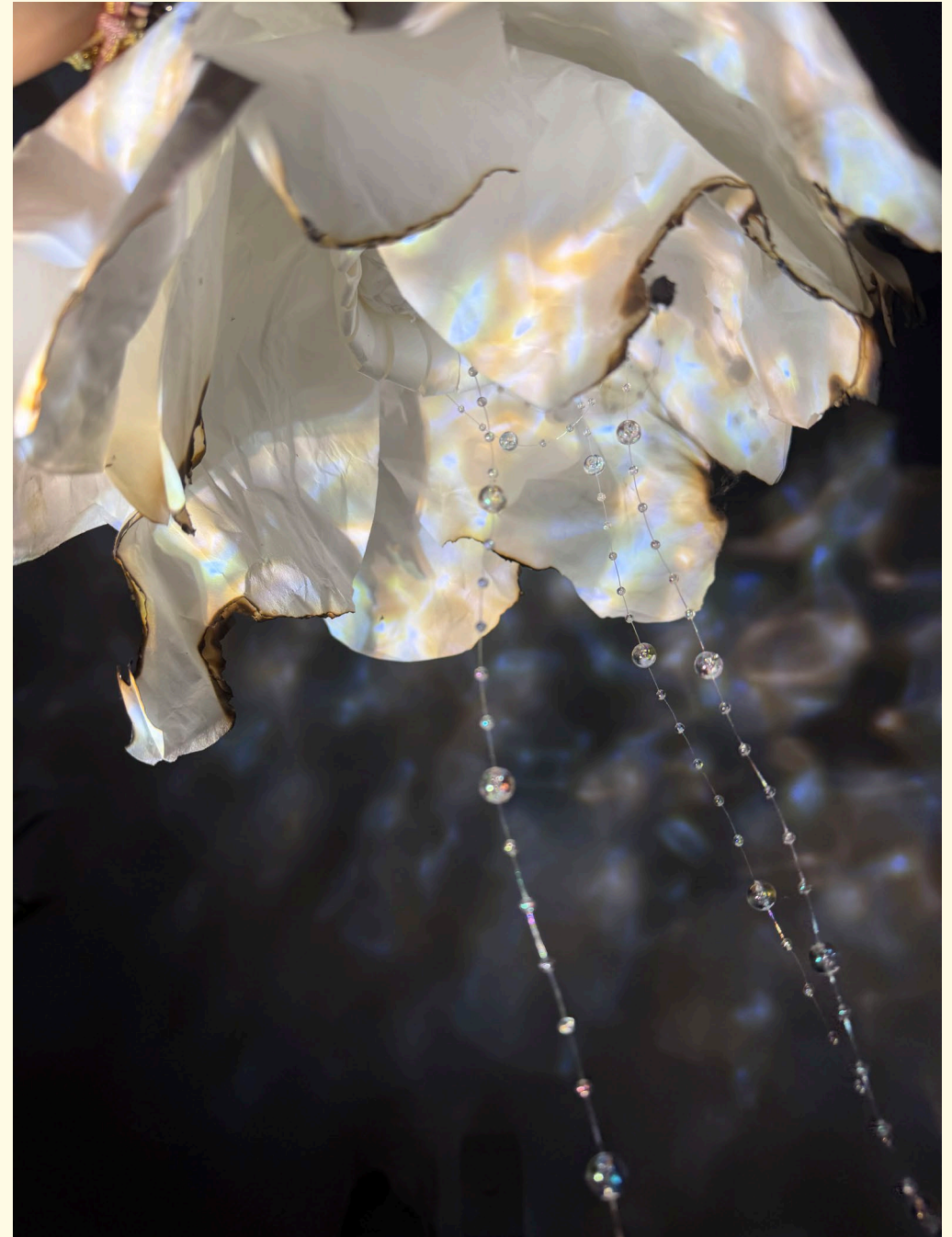
Floral Forms

Artificial flowers, partially burnt, are suspended within the structure. Their form recalls both hair ornaments and ceremonial decoration, referencing the women connected to Dazai's life—the admirer, his wife, and his daughter. The traces of burning suggest damage, guilt, and irreversible consequences, while also linking back to the imagery of fireworks and the site of the incident itself.

Charred artificial flowers hang within the structure. Their form evokes both ornamentation and fragility, whilst the scorch marks suggest damage and consequence. They also serve as a metaphor for the women associated with this moment, not as concrete figures, but as emotional presences within the space.

Figure 5C. 34: Floral elements illuminated under water ripple lighting.

Figure 5C. 35: Partially fabricated floral elements with burnt surface textures.



Light as a Dual Condition

A dual-headed lighting system extends the confessional tension introduced in Scene One, constructing a spatial opposition between internal and external conditions.

One direction emits a red light that washes over the surrounding structures, suggesting external pressure, judgment, and hostility.

The opposing light projects a softer white illumination with a subtle water-like texture onto the suspended acrylic text, allowing fragments of Dazai's words to appear intermittently.

Together, these two conditions establish a dialogue between outer force and inner reflection, situating the visitor within a field of tension rather than inviting direct interaction.

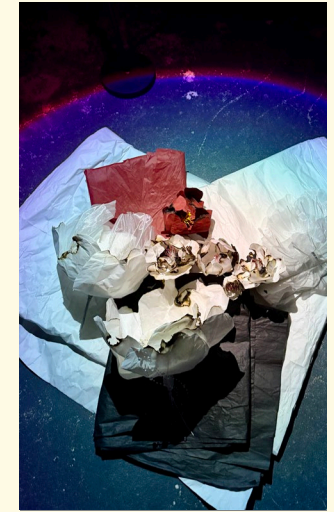


Figure 5C. 36-38: Lighting test exploring colour variation and its effect on spatial atmosphere.

Figure 5C. 39: Final lighting selection using red illumination to define the desired emotional and spatial effect.



Mono no aware: Experiencing the Transient

This installation draws inspiration from the Japanese aesthetic concept of 'mono no aware', which refers to an awareness of impermanence and the quiet melancholy that arises from the fleeting nature of existence.

Rather than presenting this concept directly, the work creates an atmosphere that allows the viewer to experience it viscerally:

- Elements suspended in limbo
- Shifting light and shadow that resist stability
- Materials that suggest fragility and transience

Like fireworks, this work does not aim to tell a complete story.

It exists in a moment that cannot be grasped, but only experienced.

Figure 5C. 40: White chrysanthemum in the process of burning, evoking a sense of ephemerality and quiet melancholy.



Spatial Testing and Installation Trial

As part of the final development, a full-scale material and lighting test was conducted during a one-week installation period at AUT Test Space. All key elements were assembled on site, including suspended components, material arrangements, and lighting conditions, allowing the project to be evaluated as an integrated spatial environment. While the complete circular structure (2.5m diameter) was not physically suspended due to technical requirements, the proposed suspension system was later reviewed and confirmed as feasible through consultation with exhibition technicians. Subsequent tests focused on suspending the acrylic text elements and abstract structures, where lighting conditions were applied and refined. These tests produced results consistent with the intended atmospheric and spatial effects, confirming the viability of the installation strategy.

Figure 5C. 41: Installed circular structure with floral elements fixed in position within the test space.





Figures 5C.42: Circular installation viewed under water ripple lighting, highlighting shifting spatial perception and light movement.

Abstract Structure and Fragility

The suspended abstract structure draws inspiration from Yuko Nishikawa's *Sprawling Paper-Pulp Mobiles*, where dispersed elements form delicate and expansive compositions. This approach informed a structure that appears lightweight and unstable, as if held in a temporary state of balance. Rather than presenting a fixed form, the installation suggests a condition of suspension and potential collapse, reinforcing the project's broader exploration of fragility, tension, and ephemerality.

Figure 5C. 43: Abstract suspended structure under red lighting, emphasising spatial tension and emotional intensity.





Figure 5C. 44: Installation process of abstract structure.

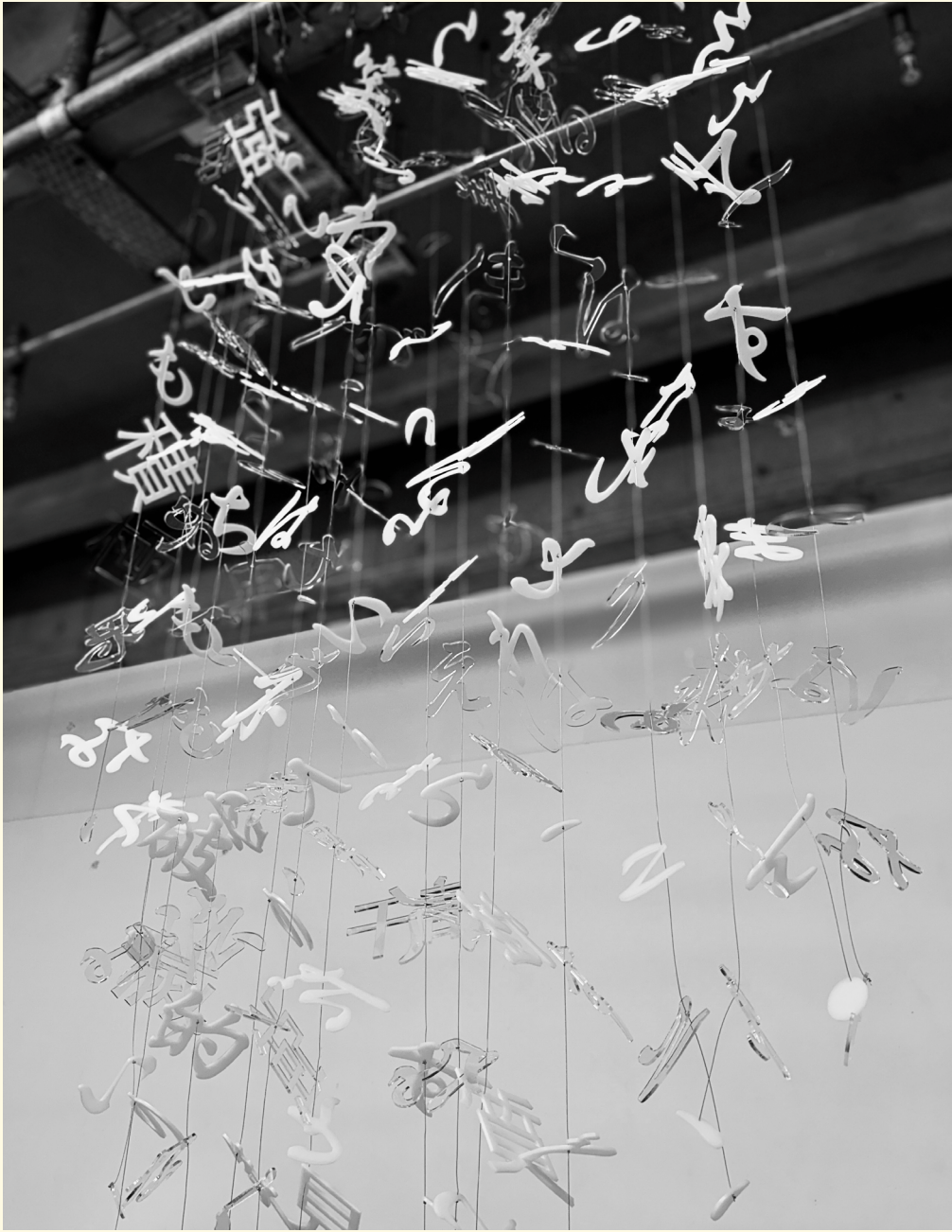


Figure 5C.45: Acrylic text installation under normal ambient lighting conditions.



Figure 5C.46: Acrylic text installation with lighting removed.



Figures 5C.47-48: Acrylic text installation viewed from multiple angles under water ripple lighting, exploring spatial and perceptual variation.

Final Design Refinement

Following the 1:1 installation testing conducted in the AUT Test Space, a series of refinements were made to the final design. These adjustments emerged through direct observation of the spatial experience and were intended to strengthen conceptual clarity, improve visual cohesion, and better communicate the project's engagement with 'mono no aware'.

One of the most significant changes was the removal of all commercially manufactured artificial flowers, retaining only the handmade flowers developed through material experimentation. This decision established a more consistent visual language throughout the installation while reinforcing the project's emphasis on impermanence and fragility. The handmade flowers carry visible traces of making, ageing, and deterioration, qualities that align more closely with the concept of mono no aware (Fig. 5C.49). Reducing the variety of floral forms also helped minimise visual distraction and allowed visitors to focus more clearly on the overall spatial composition.

Figure 5C. 49: Reducing the variety of flowers helps reduce visual distractions.



The central glass element present in earlier iterations was also removed. During the full-scale installation test, the glass introduced an additional focal point that competed with the suspended flowers and fragmented textual elements. By eliminating this component, the hierarchy of materials became clearer and the visual narrative more focused. The flowers were subsequently reconfigured into a tapered, conical formation that gradually descends toward the centre of the installation (Fig. 5C. 50). This arrangement enhances the sense of downward movement and disappearance, suggesting a firework in the process of fading rather than exploding.



Figure 5C. 50: The way the flowers are hung has been reshaped into a cone.

To further develop this idea, a layer of flexible metal mesh was introduced around the suspended floral structure. Shaped to resemble the lingering smoke after a firework has faded, the mesh creates a soft, atmospheric field surrounding the installation (Fig. 5C.51). This addition shifts the emphasis away from the spectacle of the firework itself and toward its aftermath. Rather than celebrating a moment of brightness, the installation focuses on traces, residue, and disappearance. The smoke-like forms reinforce the project's exploration of impermanence and strengthen the connection to *mono no aware*, making the concept of a fading firework more explicit within the final work.

Collectively, these refinements simplified the material composition, clarified the spatial hierarchy, and strengthened the relationship between concept, materiality, and visitor experience.



Figure 5C. 51: The shape of the metal mesh mimics the smoke left after fireworks disappear.

Establishing the Final Concept

In contrast to the expansive narrative system of the third phase, this final installation operates through intensity and conciseness. It does not discard the preceding phases, but rather absorbs and reconfigures them into a single spatial moment. A range of emotional states: shame, desire, breakdown, and judgement, coexist within one spatial condition, allowing complexity to be experienced simultaneously rather than sequentially.

This outcome reflects a key finding of the research:

Exhibition design need not rely on linear narrative structures.

Instead, it can construct embodied environments in which meaning emerges through the intersection of movement, perception, and atmosphere.

Positioned as a spatial design practice, this project demonstrates how literary experience can be translated into a condensed, immersive installation, where narrative is not told but encountered. The final work, therefore, operates not as a representation of Dazai's life but as an affective spatial condition that invites reflection on fragility, tension, and the fleeting nature of human experience.

6. Conclusion

6. Conclusion

This project aims to explore how spatial design can transform literary narratives into embodied and immersive experiences, using the biography and works of Osamu Dazai as its source material and conceptual framework.

Through an iterative development process, the project shifted from a multi-scene narrative structure to a condensed spatial installation. This transformation is not merely formal but also methodological. It redefines how narrative operates within spatial design, shifting from a sequential narrative system to a synchronous and experiential state.

In the initial phase, the five-scene framework demonstrated how literary themes could be transformed into spatial sequences, establishing a coherent narrative trajectory. However, the subsequent shift towards a single, highly condensed moment revealed that narrative clarity does not depend solely on linear progression. Rather, coherence is achieved through the careful orchestration of overlapping elements: light, materials, text and spatial layout, within a unified field.

The final installation embodies this approach.

By condensing multiple emotional states into a suspended spatial condition, the work allows visitors to perceive the narrative as a tangible, interpretative experience rather than a fixed plotline.

Emotional resonance is not achieved through explicit representation, but stems from the atmosphere. Shifting light, translucent materials and suspended fragments intertwine to create a space imbued with instability and ambiguity, inviting the audience to project their own interpretations. In this sense, emotion is not imposed, but co-created by the work and the viewer.

The fusion of materials and atmosphere plays a central role in this process. Materials serve not merely as decorative elements, but as vessels of meaning. By fragmenting perception through reflection, distortion and shadow, the project reinforces its exploration of identity, exposure and internal conflict. This fusion ensures that the sensory experience remains closely aligned with the conceptual intent.

This project also employs spatial immersion as a key design strategy. By positioning the installations above and around the viewer, the work dismantles fixed viewing positions, instead constructing an environment that must be physically navigated. This transforms the audience from passive observers into active participants, engaging both the body and the senses.

Concurrently, the project explores the Japanese aesthetic concept of ‘mono no aware’, translating its acute sensitivity to impermanence into a vocabulary of space and matter. Suspended elements, fragile materials and ever-changing lighting conditions evoke a sense of transience that transcends specific cultural contexts to achieve universality. In this way, the project strikes a balance between cultural specificity and universal emotional experience.

Crucially, this work does not aim to present Dazai’s life in a literal or biographical sense. Given that *No Longer Human* is written from a subjective and unreliable narrative perspective, the project instead treats ambiguity as a creative condition. Narrative is no longer a given fact, but rather a process of interpretation, fragmentation and reassembly through spatial experience.

This approach helps to broaden our understanding of spatial design practice.

This project demonstrates that exhibition design can transcend the realm of ‘presentation’ to become a medium of translation and materialisation. Through a process of creation, testing and iterative refinement, spatial design becomes a way of thinking, one that critically explores narrative, perception and emotional experience.

One of the most significant discoveries of this research was that the design process itself transformed the original research direction. While the project began as a sequential exhibition structured around five narrative scenes, the iterative process of making, testing, and full-scale installation revealed that a single spatial moment could communicate the same narrative complexity more powerfully. Rather than reducing the narrative, this condensation intensified the relationship between atmosphere, materiality, and embodied experience.

More broadly, this research suggests that exhibition design does not necessarily rely on chronological storytelling to communicate complex literary narratives. Instead, meaning can emerge through carefully constructed spatial conditions that invite interpretation, participation, and reflection. In this sense, the final installation is not a simplification of the original

exhibition proposal, but a refinement of its central ideas into a more concentrated and immersive form of spatial practice.

Ultimately, this project argues that, when carefully constructed, a single spatial moment can carry the complexity of an entire narrative. Like fireworks intense, fleeting and impossible to capture, it does not tell a complete story, but rather creates the conditions for meaning to emerge.

7. Bibliography

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* /. Vintage, 1993.

Bitner, Mary Jo. 'Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees'. *Journal of Marketing* 56, no. 2 (1992): 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1252042>.

Bokanowski, Thierry. *On Freud's Mourning and Melancholia*. Routledge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429477843>.

Dazai, Osamu, Chika Ito, and Makiko Itoh. *Osamu Dazai's No Longer Human: The Manga Edition*. Tuttle Publishing, 2023.

Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work* /. Harvard University Press, 1989.

Hale, Jonathan. 'Narrative Environments and the Paradigm of Embodiment'. In *Museum Making*. Routledge, 2012.

Joppich, Stephan. 'Mono No Aware: The Secret Key to an Intentional Life'. *Stephan Joppich*, 26 July 2023. <https://stephanjoppich.com/mono-no-aware/>.

Kandampully, Jay, Anil Bilgihan, and Sally Mohamed Amer. 'Linking Servicescape and Experiencescape: Creating a Collective Focus for the Service

Industry'. *Journal of Service Management* 34, no. 2 (2023): 316–40. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-08-2021-0301>.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, 1982. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203981139>.

Nisha, Gupta, and Zieske Christopher. Ovid: Arts-Based Phenomenological Research: Theory and Praxis. Volume 11(1) (February 2024): p 95-109.

Plakoyiannaki, Emmanuella, Georgia Stavraki, and Vasiliki Tsapi. 'The Artist and the Photograph: A Semiotic Analysis of Consumers' Experiences with Photographs'. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 25, no. 2 (2022): 256–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-09-2021-0119>.

Tröndle, Martin, Steven Greenwood, Konrad Bitterli, and Karen van den Berg. 'The Effects of Curatorial Arrangements'. *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 2 (2014): 140–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2014.888820>.

太宰治. '列車'. 青空文庫, 25 June 1936. https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000035/files/313_15102.html.

太宰治. '太宰治 二十世紀旗手 ——（生れて、すみません。）'. 青空文庫, 1975. https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000035/files/234_19994.html.

太宰治. '太宰治私小説『学生群』'. 1930. <http://www.shiro1000.jp/tama90/strike/mito.html>.

太宰治. '思案の敗北'. 青空文庫, 1 December 1937. https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000035/files/1590_18115.html.

読書猫の名著案内. '最後の太閤 | 太宰治が初めて発表した作品の全文・あらすじ・登場人物など | 読書猫の名著案内'. 24 August 2023. <https://kokatsuyo-hei.com/books/dazai-saigonotaikou/>.

8. **Exhibition**

8. Exhibition

The final installation was exhibited in Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 2. The exhibition presented the project as a full-scale spatial installation, allowing visitors to engage directly with the material, atmospheric, and experiential qualities explored throughout the research.

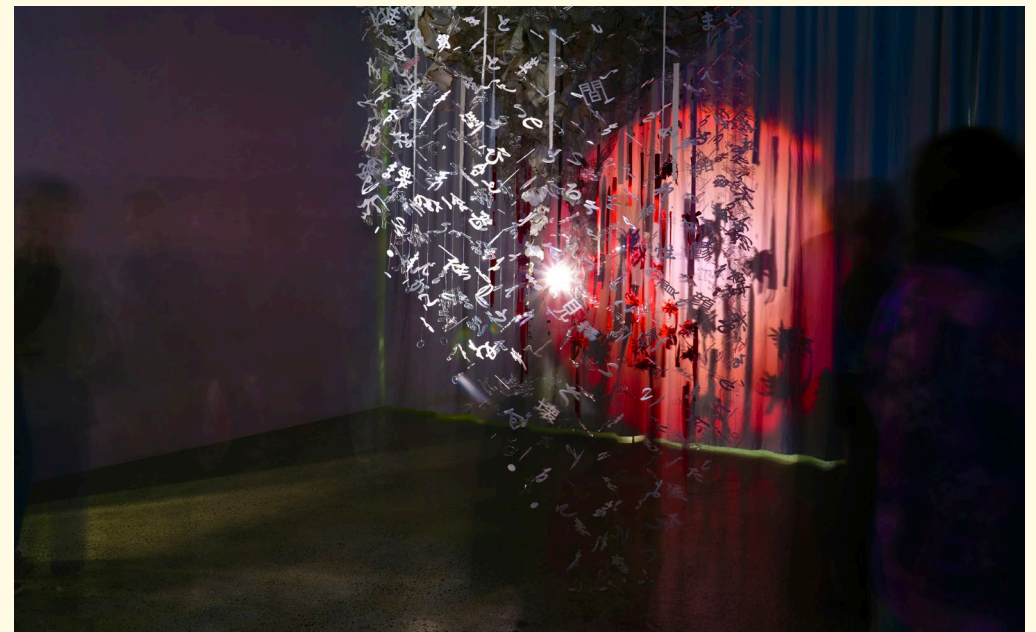
The installation was positioned near the entrance of the gallery, becoming one of the first works encountered by visitors upon entering the space. This placement was intentional, establishing an immediate visual and spatial presence before any explanatory text was read. The installation operated as an extension of the research, translating concepts of impermanence, fragility, and emotional tension into an embodied encounter.

The gallery environment remained intentionally dark, allowing the internal lighting of the installation to become the primary visual focus. Suspended elements, including handmade flowers, fabric strips, and smoke-like metal mesh, cast layered shadows throughout the surrounding space. As visitors moved around the work, their own shadows became incorporated into the installation, creating an evolving relationship between the viewer and the suspended forms.

Presented as a fading firework rather than a moment of celebration, the installation emphasised disappearance, residue, and transformation. The exhibition setting enabled the work to be experienced at a one-to-one scale, reinforcing the project's investigation into how spatial design can communicate complex literary and emotional themes through atmosphere, materiality, and perception.



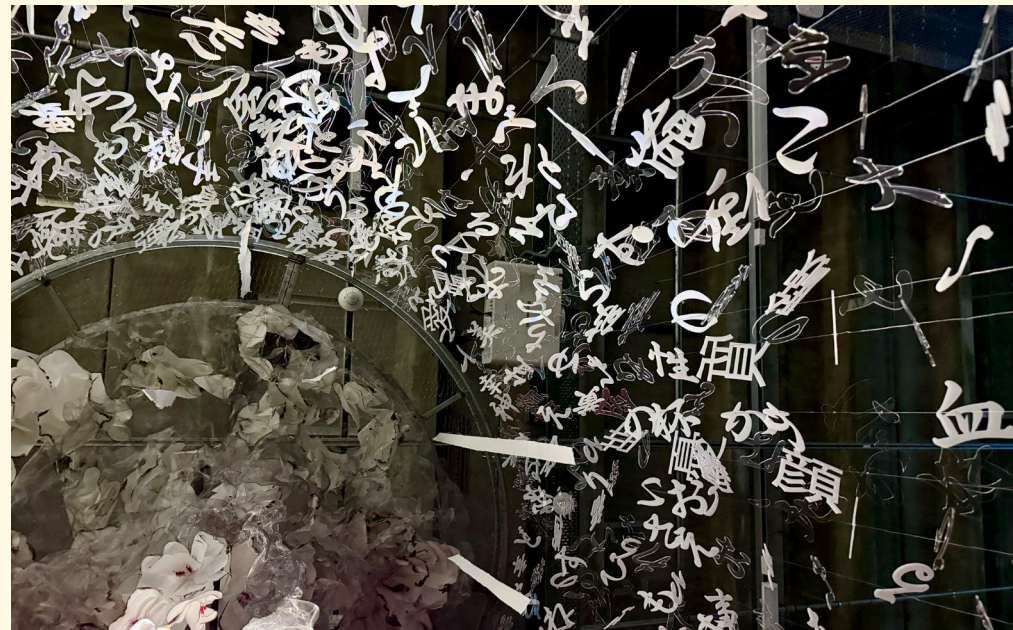
Figure 8.01: Installation in Gallery 2.



Figures 8.02-04: Different perspectives of overall installation.



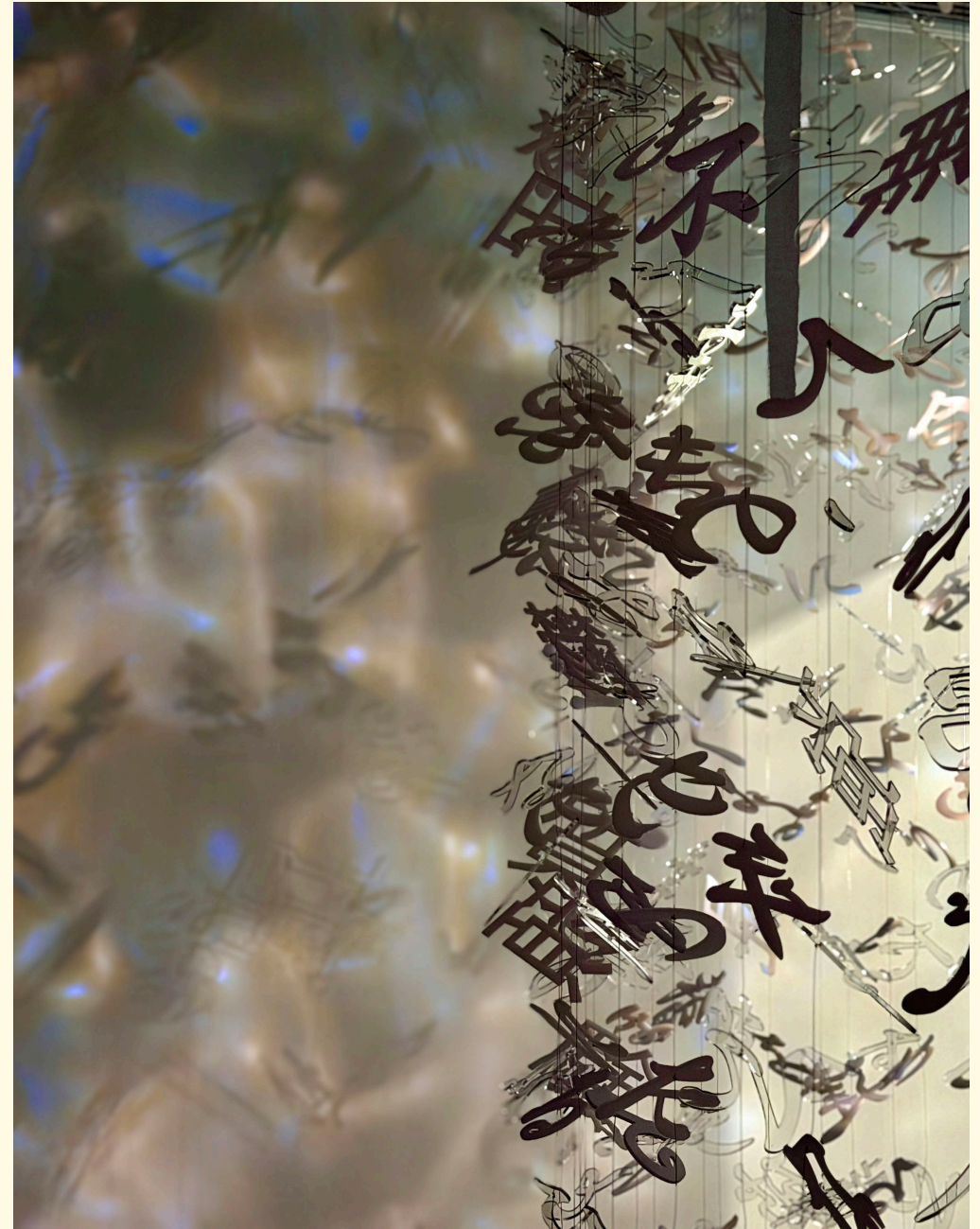
Figure 8.05: Exhibition brochure.



Figures 8.06-07: Low-angle view of the installation, exploring different perspectives.



Figure 8.08: Time-lapse photography captures the audience's movements.



Figures 8.09-11: Partial photography of acrylic text, light and shadow.



Figures 8.12-14: Partial photography of red structure.



Figure 8.15: Worm's eye view of the installation.



Figure 8.16: Time-lapse photography captures audience interaction.



Figure 8.17: Front view.