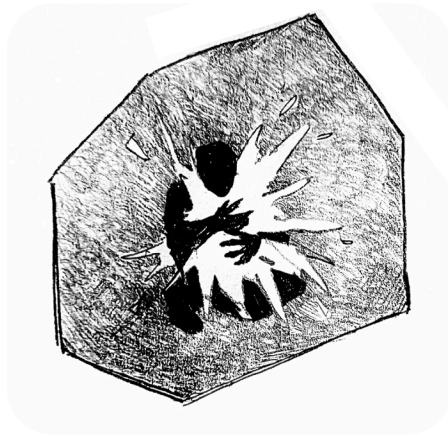




FORAGING SPACE
EMBODIED ASSEMBLAGES RESITUATING LAND-BODY
RELATIONS

JESSICA ZHANG

Foraging Space:
Embodied Assemblages Resituating Land-Body Relations

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Abstract

Foraging Space is creative practice-led research that utilises spatial dialogues of materiality, slow experiences, and embodied foraging to demonstrate how we might reconnect with nature humbly. It works to redefine relationships between non-human and human agencies as one of collaborative resilience in the face of the Anthropocene.

The inquiry draws attention to spatial design as embodying foraging practices to question how situating within natural spaces can build a bridge between mind, body and land. An embodied foraging methodology re-examines widely shared perceptions of the invasive, debris and waste through rebirth in spatial objects and temporal injections of built foraging spaces. The project manifests as the spatial design of a Forager's Hut, an encampment for a nomadic urban forager who teaches others how to gather both physically and socially, cultivating an embodied understanding of foraging while learning to use materials and wild harvest from their surrounding environment.

The scope of the research includes the design of temporary, flexible architecture for the encampment, the development of prototypical ceramic artefacts that could be used by the forager and a temporal mapping of how the forager inhabits the city, beginning with Barry Curtis Park in Manukau as the initial site for the encampment.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor any material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed**Date**

April/2026

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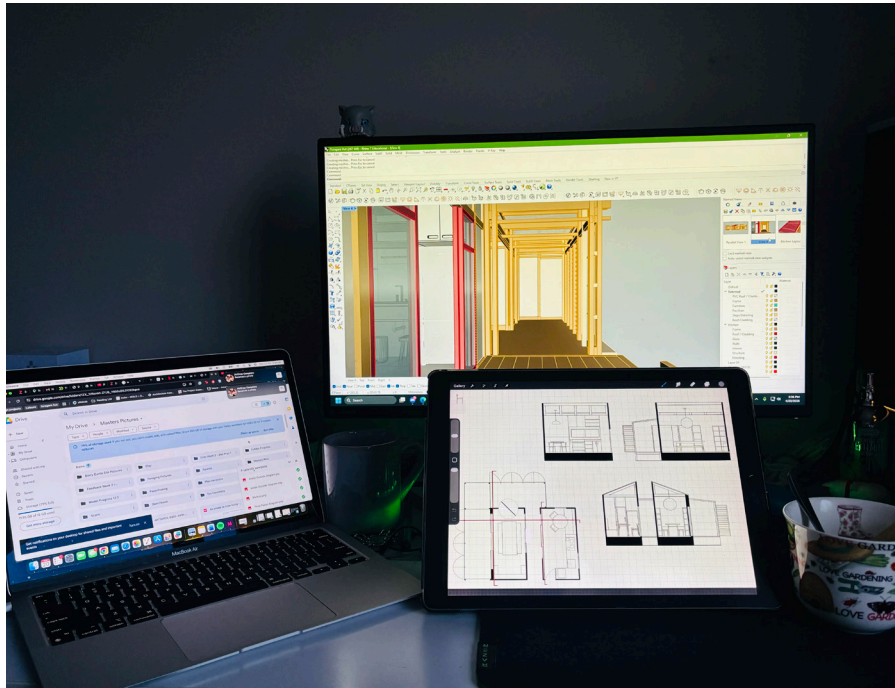


Figure 1. Jessica Zhang, Working From Home, photograph, 2025

Figure 2. Jessica Zhang, Foraging with Taylor, photograph, 2025

Section I. Turning Inwards, Turning Outwards

This spatial inquiry begins with looking inward, then outward.
Inward, to the sound of frantic keyboards and the whir of the office printer. Fresh coffee and new-machine smell.
A body pausing at the threshold.
Outward, to the fresh grass cushioning the sole of a shoe.
A leaf brushes skin.
Time loosens.
The outside announces itself not as scenery, nor as escape, but as a presence – felt through breath, weight, texture, and season.

At the core of this inquiry is foraging, understood not merely as a method of gathering food or materials, but as embodied place-making. The poetics of foraging lies in witnessing seasons change, understanding growth, decay and rebirth within ecological realms, and returning to the forests, seas and mountains that surround us. Through embodied foraging as a conceptual and methodological framework, I hope to explore how spatial design practice can resist anthropocentric logics of efficiency, ownership, and control. Central to this approach is an understanding of more-than-human worlds; where plants, animals, materials, and ecological processes are not treated as passive backdrops to human activity, but as active participants in shaping space, experience, and knowledge.¹ From this perspective, the boundaries between human and environment, inside and outside, are softened, positioning the body as part of a wider network of relationships rather than separate from it. In the face of ecological crisis and an increasingly digitised world, I ask: *how can spatial design interventions, by embodying concepts and practices of foraging, encourage meaningful dialogue about reconnecting with nature?*

¹ Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces*, Reprint (London: SAGE, 2006).

Rather than approaching this question through representation or didactic messaging, the research turns towards embodied practice. Drawing on Thomas J. Csordas's conception of embodiment as the lived, perceptual ground of experience, the body is understood not as an object in space, but as the means through which space is sensed, navigated, and made meaningful.² Foraging requires attention to season, to site, to what is present and what must be left behind. As forager Johnna Knox observes, "collecting from farms, cities and suburbs brings us face to face with the stories of our lands."³ Foraging therefore unfolds through discovery and care, shaped by the rhythms of growth and decay. As such, it offers a counterpoint to anthropocentric logics that prioritise extraction, speed and control. This research asks what might happen if spatial design were guided by similar principles – if space were shaped not to dominate the outside, but to listen to it.

The spatial outcome of this research takes form as a Forager's Hut – a provisional encampment that emerges through site engagement, material experimentation, and embodied practice. The hut is not conceived as a fixed object, or final solution, but as a spatial dialogue: a reciprocal exchange between body, material, and environment, where space is both shaped by and responsive to its conditions.⁴ It operates as a threshold between inside and outside, shelter and the wild, gathering and dwelling. Within and around it, practices of foraging, making, resting, and sharing unfold in response to local conditions and seasonal change.

Foraging Space emerges from my concern with how space shapes the ways we connect – to ourselves, to one another, and to the more-than-human world. I aspire to design spaces that are not simply occupied, but felt – spaces that inscribe memory, belonging, and bodily presence. Karen Franck and Bianca Lepori write:

It is through bodily movement, posture and activity that we engage with the world. We are not so much in space as of space. Our primary relationship is not facing space and objects as independent observers, pondering what lies before us.

² Thomas J. Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology," *Ethos* 18, no. 1 (March 1990):5-47, <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.1990.18.1.02a00010>.

³ Johanna Knox, *The Forager's Treasury: The Essential Guide to Finding and Using Wild Plants in Aotearoa*, 2nd ed (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2021).

⁴ Itai Palti, "Topolinguistics: A Science for Spatial Dialogue," *The Centre for Conscious Design*, December 30, 2025, <https://thecd.org/article/topolinguistics-a-science-for-spatial-dialogue/>.

From the very first we actively and continuously engage with the world for survival and for enjoyment.

We enact space through a vast repertoire of movements and gestures from reaching, grasping, and nursing at the mother's breast to planting and harvesting and cooking to drawing and building to a myriad more.⁵

Spatial experience is fundamentally embodied and relational, where meaning emerges through movement, interaction and lived engagement with environments. Such thinking resonates with Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of inside and outside, where spatial experience is understood not as fixed boundaries but as intimate exchanges between the body and the world.⁶

Despite this understanding, many contemporary built environments reflect a different condition. Increasingly, spatial environments mirror the abstractions of the Anthropocene: homes become sites of constant productivity, interiors collapse into digital workspaces, and the outside is reduced to scenery, resource, conquered. In this context, space no longer mediates meaningful relationships with land, season, or ecology, but often reinforces separation and control.

Foraging is a mode of moving through and with the environment – a practice shaped by reaching, bending, pausing, tasting, and discerning. It extends a "repertoire of movements" into a specific ecological context, where the body must continuously negotiate what is present, what is edible, and what must be left behind.⁷ Here, embodiment becomes attentiveness: a heightened awareness of ground, season, texture, and change. The forager does not impose upon the land, but listens to it, engaging in a reciprocal exchange where perception and action are inseparable.

Living within a digitalised world, many of us move through daily life alienated from natural rhythms of growth, decay, and renewal. Encounters with nature are frequently mediated through screens, images, and curated experiences rather than through unadulterated bodily presence.

⁵ Karen A. Franck and R. Bianca Lepori, *Architecture from the inside out: From the Body, the Senses, the Site, and the Community*, 2. ed (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2007), 55.

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, with Mark Z. Danielewski and Richard Kearney (East Rutherford: Penguin Publishing Group, 2014), 227-46.

⁷ Franck and Lepori, *Architecture from the inside out*.

This disconnection is not only environmental, but spatial and psychological: a loss of intimacy with more-than-human agencies that once shaped how we dwelt, worked, and imagined life.

Foraging Space responds to this condition by positioning spatial design as a site of listening rather than control. It asks how spatial dialogues might be intentionally shaped to reintroduce friction with the outside – not as resistance, but as reciprocity. Through embodied engagement, the project seeks to weave conditions which the land is not a spectacle but encountered as an equal. As Knox reflects:

... we all know, deep inside that a reciprocal relationship with the planet isn't just about creating pristine reserves. It's about getting in there and entangling ourselves with the land and the life around us in a relationship of give and take. When we go too far one way or the other, we lose what it is to be a part of the Earth.⁸

For Knox this reciprocity is enacted through attentive gathering, teaching, and making. Through foraging walks and workshops, participants learn to move slowly through landscapes, recognising seasonal patterns and their role within living ecological systems. Through the design of a temporary adaptable architecture, the making of one-to-one scaled artefacts from foraged materials, and the mapping of the forager's movements across the city, the research investigates how spatial design might cultivate embodied encounters with the more-than-human world. Drawing from these practices, this research explores how spatial design might support similar modes of attentiveness within the city through developing an embodied foraging methodology.

⁸ Knox, *The Forager's Treasury*, 9.

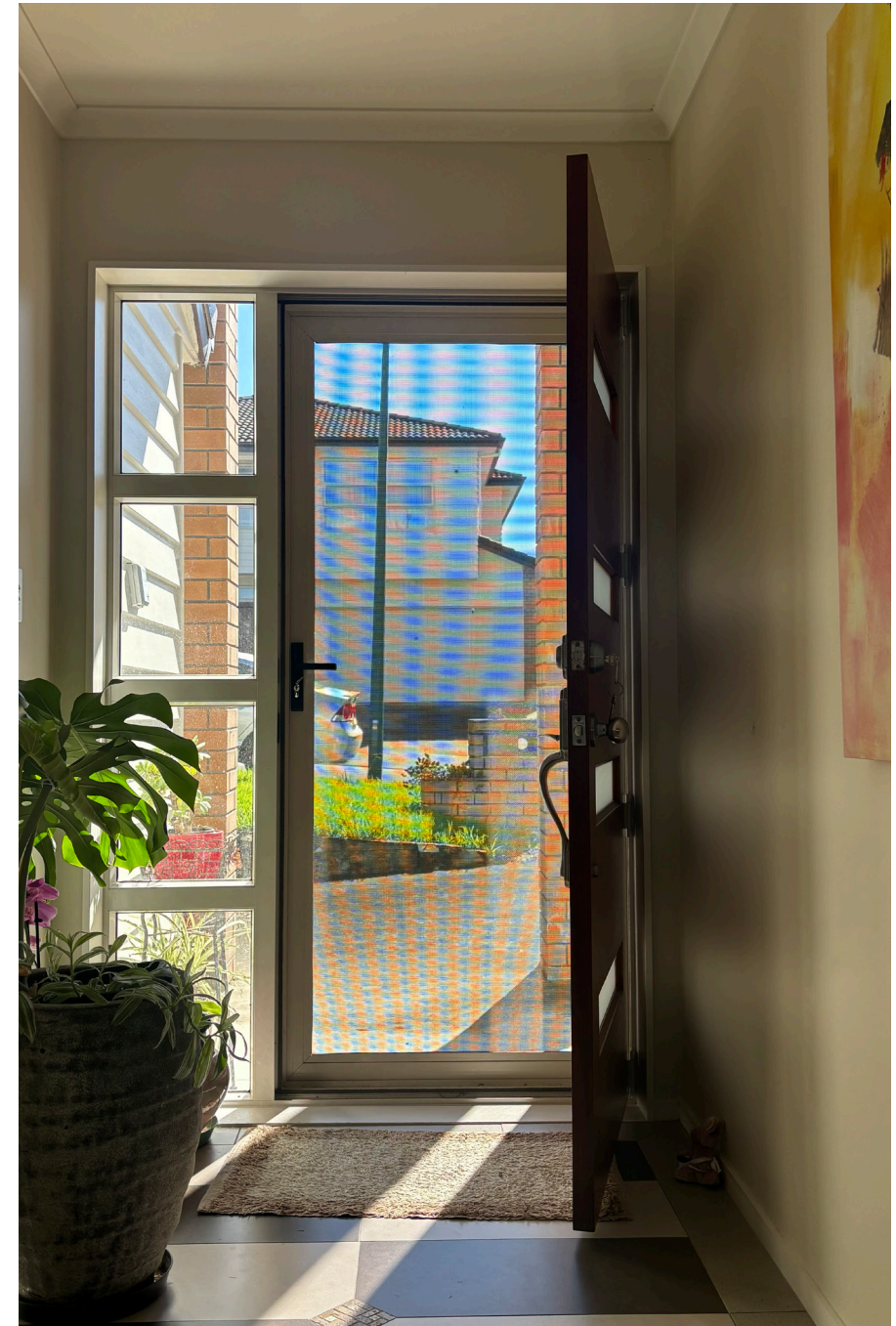


Figure 3. Jessica Zhang, *Threshold of Home*, photograph, 2025



Figure 4. Jessica Zhang, "Inside, outside, in-between",
interpretive diagram, 2025

Scope

The Forager's Hut is a spatial intervention, functioning as an assemblage of necessities and spatial friction for a hypothetical forager that teaches the community about foraging practices while engaging with the environment in a reciprocal relationship of giving and taking. The portable accommodation is transported and assembled from place to place, setting up a program of months; it includes outside of the necessary components of a house, multi-use working spaces for teaching, gathering, workshops for groups. The Hut doesn't have a final fixed form but is ever evolving and changing based on the environments in which it travels to in considering its future scope.

Materially, the project engages clay and reclaimed materials, gathered from disrupted or marginal sites, and shaped through slow, tactile processes. Clay carries the memory of land – it's compression, erosion, and time. Through ceramics ecological conditions are translated into vessels, surfaces, and fragments that hold traces of place and labour. Making with clay becomes a way of listening to land. In this way, objects are not designed for use alone, but document encounter.

This research is structured around three spatial conditions: *inside*, *outside*, and *in-between*. These are not treated as fixed oppositions, but as lived experiences that converses with one another through thresholds, movement, and memory.

Inside

Traditionally associated with intimacy, shelter, and imagination, the interior has long been understood through Gaston Bachelard’s notion of the psychological “Inside” – a space shaped by memory, enclosure, and emotional resonance.⁹ Under contemporary conditions of the Anthropocene, however, this understanding has collapsed, as domestic space is flattened into an optimised site of productivity. Remote work has reordered domestic space: the kitchen table doubles as a desk, rooms reorganize around productivity, life synchronises with continuous connectivity. This project proposes an alternative – interiors understood not as sealed architectural containers, but as conditions that emerge through making, gathering, and care. Defined less by walls but by bodily proximity, it is shaped through routines, leaves drying, vessels holding gathered matter. Foraged objects accumulate as a quiet archive of encounters between body and land. Here, the interior becomes a space of intimacy and embodiment, where materials are transformed through touch, memory, and everyday practice.

Outside

Often imagined as the vast expanse beyond the window, the outside appears as forest, horizon, and weather – an immense “Outside” that both fascinates and unsettles. Yet within Western spatial thought it is frequently framed through anthropocentric logics that separate humans from land, rendering landscapes as spectacle, resource, or territory to be managed. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, such perspectives emerge from colonial knowledge systems that produce knowledge about land rather than with it.¹⁰ In response, this project repositions the outside as a relational field of encounter across both city and landscape. Through embodied foraging, the forager moves through parks, coastlines, forests, and urban edges, gathering materials and working with human and non-human others.

⁹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 244.

¹⁰ Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Zed Books, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1426837>.

In-betweens

Between these conditions lie the in-betweens: doors, windows, shelters, and huts – thresholds where inside and outside exchange breath. As Bachelard suggests, these spaces hold intimacy and vastness in relation – shelter that doesn't refuse exposure. Here, the closeness of the nest meets the openness of landscape, and land shifts from distant spectacle to present condition, woven into the everyday. In this project, the In-Between takes architectural form through the temporary huts and encampment. These adaptable modules operate as spatial thresholds that support the rhythms of the forager’s life and work – enabling shelter, preparation, making, and gathering while maintaining a continuous dialogue between body, dwelling, and land.

Ultimately, this research seeks to explore how spatial practices might help us find ourselves again within an increasingly digitalised world – not by retreating from contemporary life, but by re-rooting it. Through foraging, making, and dwelling, the project asks how we might turn towards the outside with care, curiosity, and attentiveness, and in doing so, reimagine our spaces as sites of intimacy.



Figure 5. Jessica Zhang, “A Path to Where?”, photograph, Barry Curtis Park, Summer, 2025.

Section II.

Observing and Dissolving

This section amalgamates the written, sociological, visual, material, and theoretical contexts that shape the terrain of this research, weaving past and present ideas that resonate and inspire my own design methodologies. These references entangle with my practice, foregrounding the dichotomy of inside and outside and the dissolution of such boundaries through more-than-human praxis. I critique contemporary social conditions to challenge anthropocentric perspectives of lived experience. Embodied foraging is positioned as a reparative act, reconnecting mind, body, and land.

Once again, this contextual discussion is split in three:
inside, outside, and the in-between.

**Inside:
A CRISIS OF INTERIORITY**

L'espace m'a toujours rendu silencieux.
(Space has always reduced me to silence)

Jules Valles, *L'enfant*.¹¹

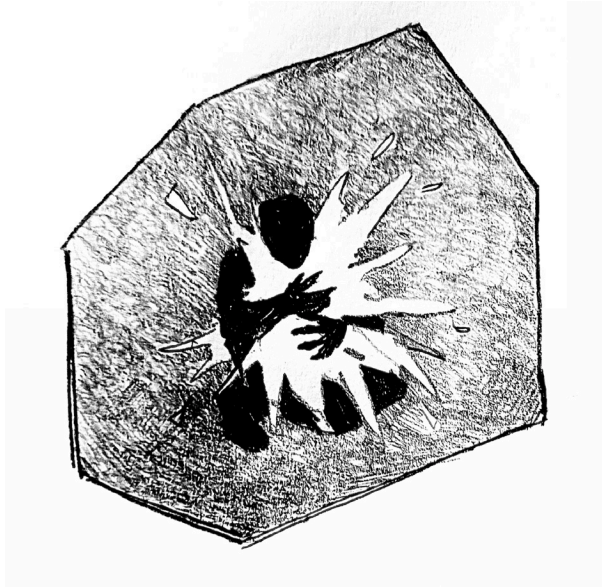


Figure 6. Jessica Zhang, "Inside",
interpretive sketch, 2025

¹¹ Jules Valles, *L'enfant*. ([S.l.]: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 238.

“Topoanalysis” is a concept developed by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard as a phenomenological framework for studying the psychology of space in our intimate lives.¹² It attends to how spatial conditions – such as enclosure, proximity and transition – shape spatial experiences, memory and emotional resonance. Interior and exterior spaces are not neutral containers, but active mediators between human experience, environmental awareness and spatial practice. This project utilises topoanalysis as a design lens, translating phenomenological insights into spatial strategies.

Thresholds such as windows and doors mediate our relationships to the world through distinctions of “outside” and “inside” – distinctions that are not only physical and architectural, but deeply psychological, and which “multiply with countless diversified nuances.”¹³ As Bachelard suggests, these nuances are shaped by subjectivity, memory, and emotion. While the “inside” is commonly associated with intimacy, safety, and imagination, the outside correlates to the vastness and exciting uncertainty of the “universe”. These thresholds reveal themselves not as a fixed spatial feature but sites of exchange, negotiation and subjectivity.¹⁴ In the contemporary world, thresholds that once regulated distance, pause, and transition are increasingly flattened. A topoanalysis suggests thresholds are not boundaries to be maintained or erased, but active spatial dialogues capable of dissolving rigid human–nature binaries and re-situating the interior within broader ecological and temporal systems.

¹² Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 30.

¹³ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 231.

¹⁴ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 228–246.

The contemporary collapse of interior thresholds is closely linked to the rationalisation of space and labour described by sociologist Max Weber, where capitalist systems reorganise everyday environments around efficiency, predictability, and control.¹⁵ Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* (Marseille, 1947–52) offers a critical example of how modernist architecture reconfigured thresholds under this logic. Conceived as a “vertical garden city,”¹⁶ the *Unité* internalised housing, circulation, leisure, and even nature within a single architectural system. Rather than mediating between inside and outside, domestic life was highly optimised through standardised units, modular proportions, and controlled circulation. Although communal corridors and a rooftop garden were intended for collective engagement and contact with the outdoors, these spaces function as interiorised simulations rather than true thresholds. Nature was elevated, framed, and abstracted – rendered architectural rather than encountered as a dynamic condition. In this sense, the *Unité* anticipates contemporary digitally optimised interiors, where work, domesticity, and leisure collapse. For this project, it serves as a cautionary reference, demonstrating that collapsing boundaries through internalisation risks erasing difference rather than restoring connection. A capitalistic logic of pure efficiency fuses work and home, streamlining operations, and maximising output. On one hand, remote work validates its efficacy daily, facilitating solitary focus and complex collaboration via shared screens, while offering life changing flexibility for caregivers – a significant 30% of Aotearoa's workforce.¹⁷ On the other hand, it erodes the informal, interstitial spaces of relation – the walk between places, the pause in daylight, the chance encounter – that sustains collective belonging and psychological restoration.

15 Max Weber's analysis of rationalisation describes how modern capitalist societies organise life around efficiency, predictability, and control, reshaping both labour and everyday environments. This logic is reflected architecturally in projects such as Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*, where “a house is a machine for living in” prioritising optimisation over lived spatial nuance.

Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Reprint, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2010); Le Corbusier, Jean-Louis Cohen, and John Goodman, *Toward an Architecture, Texts & Documents* (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2007).

16 Kenneth Easton, “Views on Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*,” *The Architectural Review*, May 8, 1951, <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/views-on-le-corbusiers-unite-dhabitation>.

17 Mary Jo Vergara, “The Future of Work Is Flexible,” *The Spinoff*, December 23, 2021, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/business/23-12-2021/the-future-of-work-is-flexible-2>.



Figure 7. Kenneth Easton, *Unité d'Habitation* by Le Corbusier, photograph, 1951.

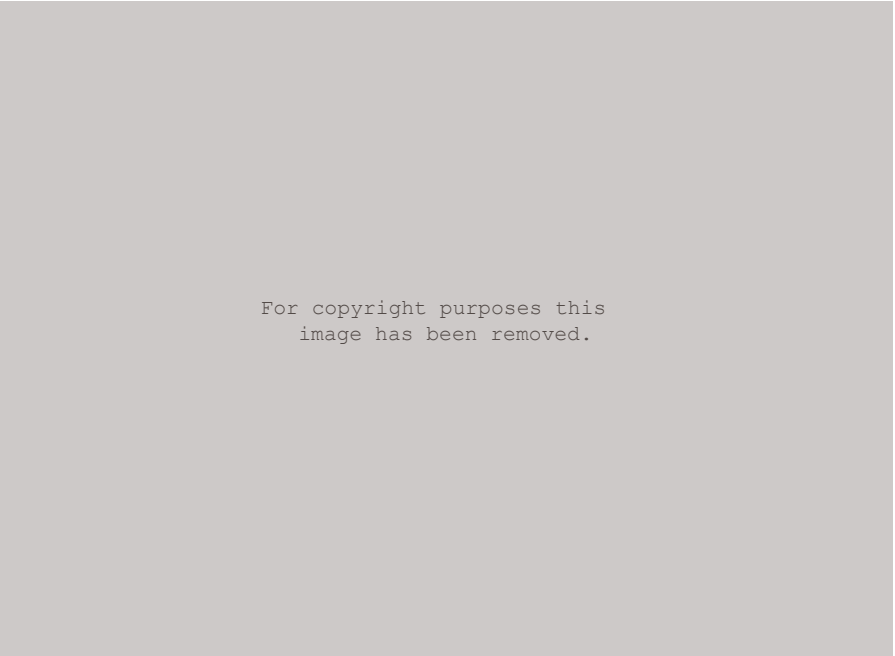


Figure 8. Kenneth Easton, *Unité d'Habitation* by Le Corbusier, photograph, 1951.

Without architectural thresholds to structure transition, occupants toggle ceaselessly between modes – intensifying fatigue, evacuating the interior’s restorative potential.

In *Atmospheres*, Swiss architect Peter Zumthor describes architecture as something that operates prior to conscious thought.¹⁸ Central to this is the role of thresholds – moments of spatial transition that prepare the body for changes in scale, light, sound, and social condition. This understanding of thresholds is materialised with Zumthor’s work on the bathhouse *Therme Vals*.¹⁹ Rather than a seamless or multifunctional interior, *Therme Vals* unfolds as a sequence of discrete conditions separated by deliberate thresholds. Movement through the building is gradual; shifts in temperature are mediated by transitional zones; light filters slowly from exterior brightness into shadowed depth.

Figure 9. Andrea Ceriani for ArchDaily,
Therme Vals / Peter Zumthor, 1996



¹⁸ Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006).

¹⁹ “The Therme Vals / Peter Zumthor,” ArchDaily, February 11, 2009, <https://www.archdaily.com/13358/the-therme-vals>.



Figure 10. Andrea Ceriani for ArchDaily,
Therme Vals / Peter Zumthor, 1996

Through these thresholds, cognitive and sensory labour is redistributed back to the architecture, enabling attention to recalibrate without conscious effort. Read against the spatial logic of the contemporary home-workspace, Zumthor’s work offers a counter-model in which architecture actively supports embodied transition and restoration. This position directly informs my practice, which prioritises spatial sequencing and embodied dialogue over efficiency and multifunctionality. Through the exploration of the “hut” as a spatial dialogue, I investigate how material, atmospheric, and temporal thresholds can operate as a critique of extractive productivity by reinstating moments of pause, withdrawal, and recalibration within everyday spaces.

The contemporary spatial crisis is not simply one of efficiency or technological intrusion, but of lost mediation. As thresholds are flattened under the Anthropocene, architecture loses its capacity to regulate pause, transition and relational distance. I reposition thresholds as material, atmospheric and temporal spatial dialogues, dissolving rigid human-nature binaries while holding difference in relation and re-situating everyday interiors within broader more-than-human worlds.

Outside:
RELATIONAL ECOLOGIES

Lovers of the New Zealand forest...
have to live in an age when axe and fire
are doing their deadly work so fast...

William Pember Reeves,
*New Zealand: Painted by F. And W. Wright.*²⁰



Figure 11. Jessica Zhang, "Outside",
interpretive sketch, 2025

²⁰ William Pember Reeves and F. Wright, *New Zealand: Painted by F. And W. Wright* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908,), 77.

Anthropocentrism positions humans as the central most significant entities in the world. This perspective, rooted in many Western fields of thought, rests on a nature-culture dualism that assigns ontological priority to the former.²¹ As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, such dualisms are not neutral epistemic positions but products of colonial knowledge systems that privilege “disruptions”, extraction, classification and control.²² Smith critiques Western research traditions for separating humans from land, objectifying environments as resources and producing knowledge about the world rather than with it. In this framework, the “outside” is rendered inert, and relational ways of knowing are systematically marginalised. Within this research, Smith’s work is understood as a critical lens for questioning these modes of knowledge production, rather than as a methodology that this project seeks to adopt or reproduce. Her critique prompts consideration of how spatial research might move beyond detached observation and towards more situated and embodied engagements with place. Smith’s discussion of decolonising methodologies therefore provides a basis for questioning abstract and extractive modes of knowledge production and considering the value of more relational and place-responsive forms of inquiry. In response to ecological alienation in the Anthropocene, this research considers how slow, immersive design processes might operate as poetic counter-narratives to anthropocentric spatial logics, fostering reconnection through collaborative engagement with the “outside”. Extractive logics are not abstract; they materialise in everyday life through how time is managed, space is occupied, and attention is disciplined. Oliver Burkeman critiques modern life’s obsession with productivity, observing that earlier forms of labour were structured around ecological rhythms rather than imposed schedules.²³

²¹ Helen Kopnina et al., “Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 31, no. 1 (February 2018): 109–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-018-9711-1>.
²² Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*.
²³ Oliver Burkeman contrasts contemporary productivity culture with pre-industrial forms of labour, noting that agricultural work historically followed the rhythms of seasons and ecological cycles rather than externally imposed schedules. As he observes, medieval peasants lived harder lives materially but were not haunted by the modern anxiety of maximising time, since farming tasks were governed by the ongoing and cyclical demands of milking, harvesting, and tending land rather than the pursuit of efficiency or completion.

Oliver Burkeman, *Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

He writes:

You milked the cows when they needed milking and harvested the crops when it was harvest time, and anybody who tried to impose an external schedule on any of that – for example, by doing a month’s milking in a single day to get it out of the way, or by trying to make the harvest come sooner – would rightly have been considered a lunatic. There was no anxious pressure to “get everything done,” either, because a farmer’s work is infinite: there will always be another milking and another harvest, forever, so there’s no sense in racing towards some hypothetical moment of completion.²⁴

Foraging requires attunement to the outside; attentiveness to seasonal cycles, landscape conditions, and the subtle cues of more-than-human worlds. The Japanese philosophy of Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) cultivates slow, embodied immersion in living environments through listening, breathing, and attentive observation.²⁵ Rather than restoring nature as a distant “outside,” the practice introduces temporal friction through embodied presence, allowing ecological rhythms to register through the body.

Shinrin-yoku reframes slowness not as inefficiency, but as a necessary condition for psychological restoration and relational dwelling with more-than-human worlds. This aligns with indigenous worldviews in Aotearoa, where relationships to land are understood as genealogical, reciprocal and ongoing – where fields of knowledge and spatial friction emerge through lived engagement rather than detached observations. In Māori cosmology, the land is not a passive backdrop, but a living ancestor connected through *whakapapa*, dissolving rigid human-nature binaries and positioning humans as part of nature rather than separate from it.²⁶

²⁴ Burkeman, *Four Thousand Weeks*.

²⁵ Qing Li, *Shinrin-Yoku: The Art and Science of Forest-Bathing ; How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness* (London: Penguin Life, 2018).

²⁶ In Māori cosmology, *whenua* refers both to land and placenta, emphasising genealogical relationships between people and land. These relationships are articulated through *whakapapa*, a relational genealogy connecting humans, plants, animals, water, and soil within a shared lineage, and through *kaitiakitanga*, a principle of care, responsibility, and guardianship toward ecological systems.

“Auckland Design Manual – Māori Design,” Auckland Council, <https://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/en/places-and-spaces/maori-design.html>.

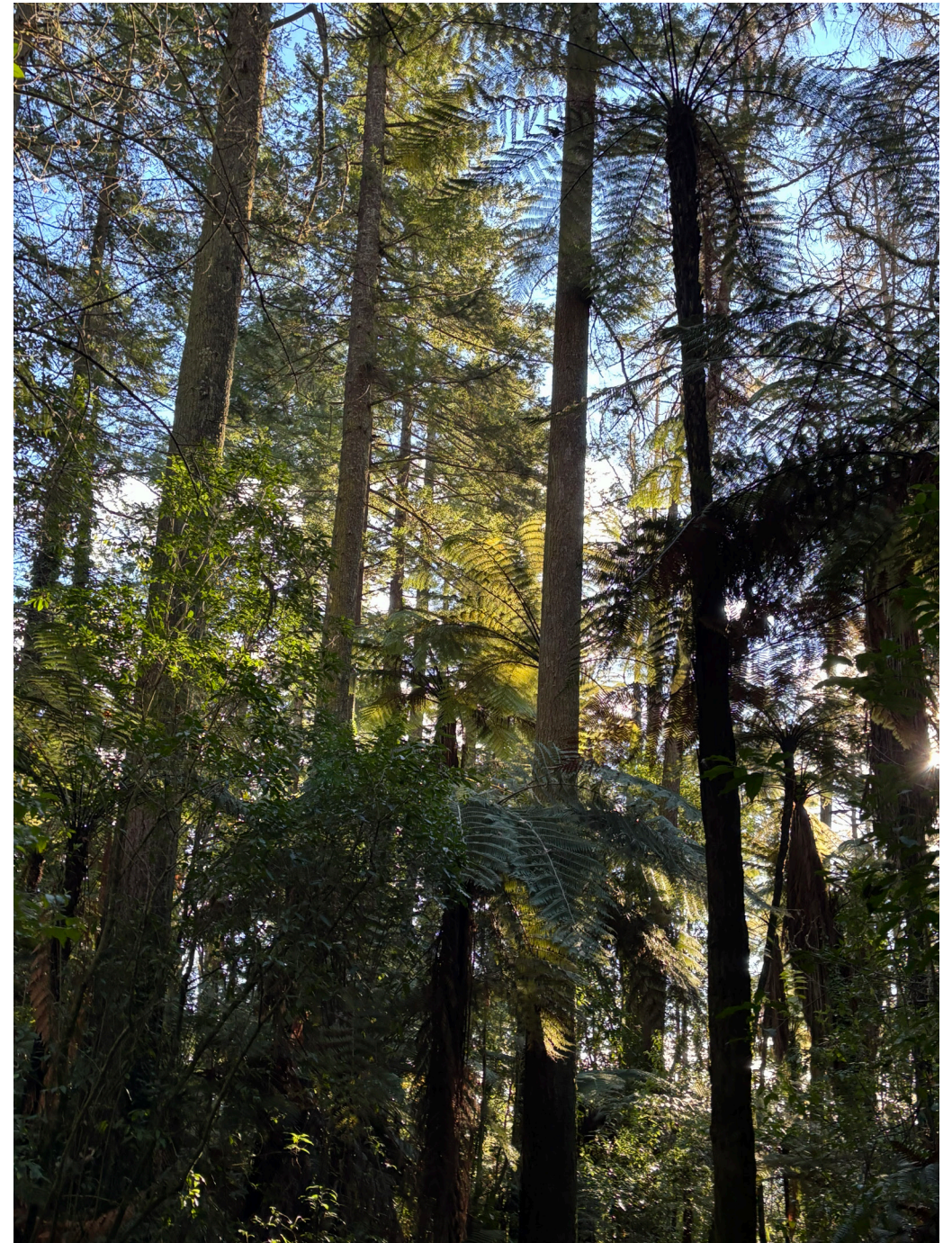


Figure 12. Jessica Zhang, Shinrin-Yoku within Waiuku Forest, photograph, 2025

Anthropologist Anna Tsing’s post-humanist work on “capitalist ruins” frames foraging as a practice that unfolds within disruptions of nature, particularly in landscapes shaped by capitalist extraction.²⁷ For Tsing, foraging is not a return to purity but an ethic of reciprocity within damaged environments, where survival depends on responsiveness to more-than-human agencies. Central to her thinking is the notion of “assemblages”: contingent gatherings of human and non-human agencies that come together without hierarchy or central control.²⁸ Within this framework, “assemblages” offer a way of understanding how relations between humans and more-than-human worlds might be continually reconfigured through reciprocal engagement with land. This research extends Tsing’s concept spatially through the design of a loose architectural assemblage – an evolving encampment composed of huts, tools, foraged materials, artefacts and people. Rather than a fixed architectural object, the encampment operates as a dynamic “assemblage” of elements that accumulate, shift, and disperse over time, reflecting the contingent and relational nature of foraging practices itself.

Read alongside Māori relational frameworks, foraging can be understood as an “outside” practice grounded in humility, patience, and attentiveness. A spatial example of this relational approach can be seen in the Rongoā Garden developed by Xanthe White, where medicinal plants are organised through whakapapa, seasonality, and cultural use rather than botanical classification. The garden offers an Indigenous precedent for understanding the ‘outside’ as a relational space shaped through care rather than control. Plants are understood in relation to place, season, whakapapa, and use, as the project notes:

Through engaging with our senses with this garden space, we can reconnect with the knowledge which restores our health and wellbeing. The Rongoā and other medicinal plants selected for this garden offer opportunities for us to return our focus to the natural world and through this connection allow our wellness to be restored.²⁹

In Rongoa Garden, health is understood not as an individualised outcome, but as a relational condition sustained through ongoing

27 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom At The End Of The World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, New paperback printing (Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021).

28 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 22-25.

29 “Rongoa & Sensory Garden,” Xanthe White Design, accessed March 29, 2026, <https://xanthewhitedesign.co.nz/project/sensory-garden>.

engagement with the natural world. The outside is not just a backdrop or therapeutic escape, but an active participant in shaping human wellness, memory, and purpose. This aligns closely with Tuhiwai Smith’s call for decolonising methodologies that privilege knowledge produced with land rather than about it. Spatially, the garden resists rigid boundaries between cultivation and wildness. Native plants grow within ecological “assemblages” shaped by local conditions, reinforcing Anna Tsing’s understanding of survival and care within disturbed or contingent environments. The garden thus operates as an open-ended threshold rather than a contained interior or curated exterior, where the outside remains active, responsive, and co-constitutive of human wellbeing.

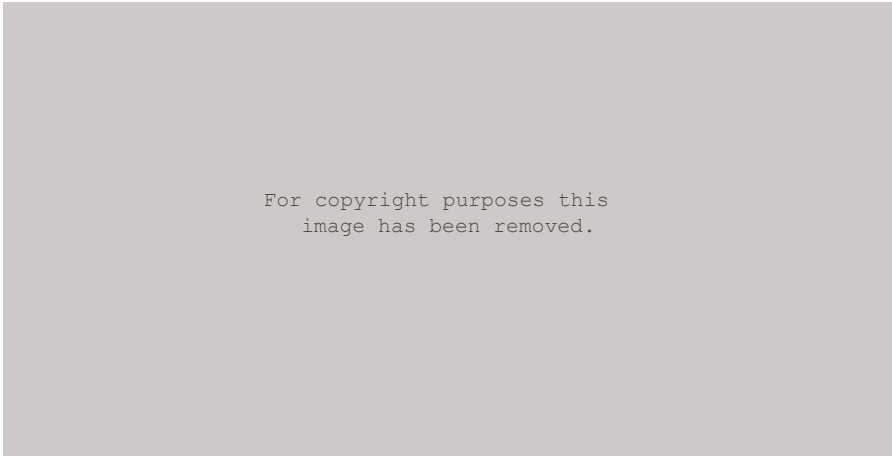


Figure 13. Xanthe White, Rongoa Garden, photograph, 2023

Figure 14. Xanthe White, Rongoa Garden, photograph, 2023

A related ethical and material sensibility can be observed in the work of Tontouristen Kollektiv, particularly in their projects *Deposit* and *Mine is Mine*, developed in response to the clay mining landscapes of Westerwald, Germany.³⁰ Encountering the vast scale of industrial clay pits, the collective became aware of the dramatic gap between the small bags of clay typically used in ceramic studios and the immense landscapes from which these materials are extracted. Through sensory research methods – including sound recordings, video, writing and bodily movement – they investigated the entanglements between clay mines, factories, and surrounding ecosystems. Their work reflects on scars left on landscapes through industrial extraction, revealing clay not as neutral material but as a substance embedded within ecological, industrial and cultural narratives. Irregularities and imperfections are embraced as expressions of material memory, while the slow processes of gathering and working with these materials condition the body to both immaterial and material spatial friction, reinforcing a reciprocal relationship grounded in listening rather than imposition.

Figure 15. Tontouristen Kollektiv, *Deposit*, film still, 2025



30 "Tontouristen Kollektiv: What Can Be Found in the Gap between the Different Clay Narratives?," *Ceramics Now*, April 28, 2025, <https://www.ceramicsnow.org/articles/tontouristen-kollektiv-what-can-be-found-in-the-gap-between-the-different-clay-narratives/>.



Figure 16. Tontouristen Kollektiv, *Mine is mine*, film still, 2025

Foraging here operates not as consumption, but as the intimate act of care that re-establishes reciprocal relationships with the “outside.” Through the harvesting of invasive weeds and the sharing of gathered food within both human and more-than-human communities, foraging becomes a practice of giving back rather than taking from land. This approach resonates with Indigenous food gathering practices in Aotearoa, where harvesting is guided by *tikanga* – context-specific ways of understanding appropriate conduct, relationships, and responsibilities. Within this research, I understand *tikanga* as drawing attention to the responsibilities involved in gathering and engaging with *whenua*, rather than treating foraging as an act of extraction alone. This understanding connects with Tuhiwai Smith’s critique of extractive approaches to knowledge and land, prompting consideration of how gathering might be approached through relationships of responsibility and care rather than extraction. In this sense, foraging draws the body beyond the enclosed interior and into the temporal rhythms of landscape, season, and social relations. The embodied foraging methodology therefore seeks to reintroduce friction with the “outside”, not as a barrier to productivity but as a generative condition for intimacy, creative incubation, and alternative modes of dwelling. Rather than fixing humans in relation to nature, foraging situates us within a dynamic assemblage of materials, ecologies, and communities, where dwelling unfolds through attentiveness, participation, and ongoing negotiation with the landscape.



Figure 17. Jessica Zhang,
Processed Foraged Clay, 2025



Figure 18. Jessica Zhang,
Fragments of Foraged Clay, 2025

In-betweens: SPATIAL ASSEMBLAGES

Car nous sommes où nous ne sommes pas.
(For we are where we are not)
Pierre-Jean Jouve, *Lyrique*.³¹



Figure 19. Jessica Zhang, "In-betweens",
interpretive sketch, 2025

³¹ P. J. Jouve, *Lyrique* (Mercure de France, 1956), 59, <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=cuk9AAAAIAAJ>.

One of my fondest childhood memories is sneaking off with my friends to the edge of the playground during lunch. Hidden from the teachers, we'd play in a narrow strip of land bordering the forest, frolicking between a mound of soil and a wired fence. The forest always enticed us – we would watch native birds flit from the canopies, or the odd parakeet swoop by.

This memory centres around the large hole in the fence – made by someone else, also lured by the forest's quiet.

We crawled through and stepped inside.

The world fell silent - it was peaceful, serene, and oddly magical. Barry Curtis Park has always been an in-between threshold for me, it's where my friends from childhood and I met up in the summer holidays, it's where I waited for my mother to pick me up after school.

It is also the proposed first location for the Forager's Hut.

The park occupies land that was formerly dairy farmland before being purchased by Manukau City Council and reimagined as a "hard-working piece of suburban infrastructure."³² The current landscape design, produced by Isthmus in 2009, positions the park as a valued communal landscape carrying shared histories and memories; however, it has gradually slipped into disrepair. This condition is evident through multiple forms of disruption across the site: sprawling invasive weeds that cover paths, decaying bridges spanning the wetlands, and an active construction zone that has erased a previously well-loved playground. These motifs disruptions – both physical and psychological – form the wider terrain my practice navigates, situating the site within broader questions of anthropocentrism and its spatial and sociological consequences.

³² "Barry Curtis Park.," Isthmus, accessed March 29, 2026, <https://isthmus.co.nz/project/barry-curtis-park/>.



Figure 20.
Jessica Zhang,
Disrupted Soil,
photograph,
2025



Figure 21.
Jessica Zhang,
Overgrown path,
photograph,
2025

Figure 22.
Jessica Zhang,
Dilapidated bridge,
photograph,
2025



Barry Curtis Park and parks alike can be understood as third places. Following Oldenburg and Brisset's definition of the spatial phenomena:

Third places exist outside the home and beyond the 'work lots' of modern economic production. They are places where people gather primarily to enjoy each other's company.³³

They manifest as bars, coffeeshops, beauty salons, barbershops, bowling alleys, recreation centres, public places where people meet, congregate and communicate.³⁴ Beyond its social function, third spaces offer an important spatial context for this research because they do not fully align with our domestic interiors and our workplaces. Situating the inquiry within third space contexts therefore establishes the conditions which an exploration of the "in-between" can unfold. While third spaces are traditionally understood through their social function, they are rarely examined as ecological or more-than-human thresholds. In spatial design discourse, these spaces are often stabilised as amenities rather than understood as sites of becoming, challenging disruptions and sustained through relational intention. It is within this gap that the concept of the "in-between" becomes critical – not as a fixed typology, but as a condition where human, ecological, material, and temporal forces intersect.



Figure 23. Jessica Zhang, Third Places, diagram, 2025

33 Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, "The Third Place," *Qualitative Sociology* 5, no. 4 (December 1982): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00986754>.

34 Oldenburg and Brissett, "The Third Place."

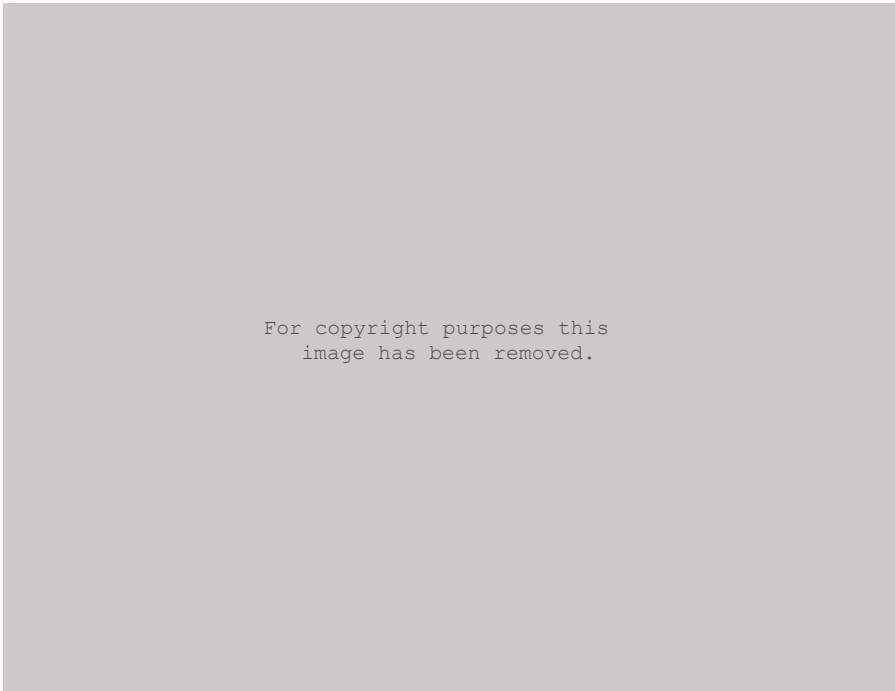


Figure 24. Zo Lin and Tiffany Lay, Grassland, photograph, 2023

Grassland, an eco-conscious herbal practice by Tiffany Lay and Zo Lin offers a compelling precedent for the in-between. Founded in 2020 in Taipei's historic Dadaocheng district, Grassland embeds foraging within local tea culture, using "unwanted" plant species to support biodiversity education and communal exchange.³⁵ Unlike conventional cafes, the project roots itself in an alternative ecology of everyday life, inviting people to recognise and engage with flora that grows freely around urban spaces rather than being confined to consumption-oriented environments. Lin and Lay create complex brews from foraged weeds – plants often dismissed as invasive or extraneous – turning them into herbal teas that carry the flavour of place and reflects Taiwan's rich biodiversity through taste and smell. This practice reframes weeds – a common inhabitant in disrupted landscapes – not as passive backdrop or nuisance but as lively, relational actors that speak of local ecology, seasonal change, and site-specific difference.

35 Annette An-Jen Liu, "In the Weeds; Art Collective 雜草稍慢 Weed Day on Shaping Spaces for Ecological Education," *MOLD :: Designing the Future of Food*, March 3, 2023, <https://thisismold.com/space/in-the-weeds-with-zo-lin-and-tiffany-lay>.

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image has been removed.

Grassland also functions as a relational pedagogical space, hosting workshops, seminars, a small library and community gatherings that centre ecological knowledge, social exchange, and embodied learning. In doing so, it dissolves the boundaries between urban life and the wild, offering an in-between condition where ecological presence, embodied practice, and communal engagement coalesce, inviting participants to slow down, observe, and reconnect with land in ways that transcend habitual separation between city, nature, and self.

Through the collective gathering of wild plants and the ritualised sharing of tea, Grassland grounds itself within seasonal rhythms, ecological knowledge, and social exchange. In doing so, the project demonstrates how foraging can operate as an embodied spatial practice, transforming overlooked urban ecologies into sites of encounter, learning, and care. Rather than separating cultivation, consumption, and community, the project weaves these activities together within a loosely structured environment where people, plants, and knowledge circulate through shared rituals. Architecture might support these encounters by providing subtle structures that host gathering, learning, and slow rhythms of ecological engagement. In such marginal spaces, life persists in unexpected ways, forming fragile assemblages that challenge the finality of collapse. In this sense, the “outside” today is neither romantic wilderness nor total loss, but a contested space where resilience and responsibility intersect. Anna Tsing’s concept of ‘collaborative survival’ - the interdependent relationships between human and non-human agents in damaged landscapes - grounds my spatial discipline in active ecological dialogue.³⁶ Foraging transcends material gathering; it becomes a spatial dialogue, reshaping perceptions of nature through the physical and immaterial memory of the place.

³⁶ Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

Figure 25. Zo Lin and Tiffany Lay, Tea ceremony, photograph, 2023

Figure 26. Zo Lin and Tiffany Lay, Weedy Day foraging workshop, photograph, 2023

One architectural project that explores such spatial mediation between dwelling, landscape, and material practice is the Palmyra House by Studio Mumbai in Nangaon, India.³⁷ Rather than imposing a rigid architectural object onto the landscape, the project emerges through an intimate dialogue with local materialities, climate, and craft traditions. Constructed primarily from palmyra wood, the house is assembled through a lightweight structural framework that allows air, light, and vegetation to move freely through the building. Verandas, layered screens, and shaded transitional spaces dissolve the distinction between interior and exterior, creating a porous spatial condition that resonates strongly with the “in-between” explored in this research. Much like the relational practices observed in Grassland, the house does not isolate domestic life from its environment but situates everyday activities within a field of ecological and atmospheric exchange. The building’s open framework, handcrafted elements, and gradual transitions between “inside” and “outside” allow architecture to function less as a boundary and more as a mediator between body, land and climate. In this sense, Palmyra House demonstrates how spatial structures can support forms of dwelling that remain attentive to seasonal rhythms, material presence, and the subtle negotiations between inside and outside.



Figure 27. Helene Binet for Studio Mumbai, Palmyra House, photograph, 2007

³⁷ "Palmyra House / Studio Mumbai," ArchDaily, May 31, 2010, <https://www.archdaily.com/62136/palmyra-house-studio-mumbai>.

Figure 28. Helene Binet for Studio Mumbai, Palmyra House, photograph, 2007



Taken together, these precedents and reflections suggest that the “in-between” is not a fixed architectural typology but a relational spatial condition that emerges where interior intimacy and ecological encounters intersect. Situated within disrupted landscapes such as Barry Curtis Park, these spaces reveal how social gathering, ecological attentiveness, and material engagement can coexist within a shared terrain. Projects such as Grassland and the Palmyra House demonstrate how architecture can support these relationships not by imposing rigid boundaries, but by mediating between body, landscape, climate, and material processes.

Section III.

Ways of Sensing and Making

In practice, design strategies function both as a mode of inquiry and a means of communication. This section explores a series of interconnected methods that translate these ideas into practice. Rather than producing a singular architectural solution, the project develops a spatial framework shaped through the embodied foraging methodology itself. In this sense, the design process remains open and iterative, allowing chance encounters, material discoveries, and ecological rhythms to guide the evolution of spatial propositions over time.

AN EMBODIED FORAGING METHODOLOGY



Figure 29.
Jessica Zhang,
Sequence tracing
a shift in scale
from landscape to
ground to hand,
photographs,
Barry Curtis Park.
Autumn 2025

Foraging is not treated solely as the gathering of food or materials but as a way of cultivating attentiveness to landscape, seasonality, and ecological reciprocity. This outward attention produces an inward one: in reading seasonal change or recognising invasive growth, we also confront human patterns of use, desire, and belonging. Applied within a spatial design context, this dual awareness shifts focus away from abstract planning toward lived encounters with place, where walking, observing, touching materials, and responding to seasonal rhythms become integral to design, revealing both landscape’s logic and our own. Embodied foraging is both a conceptual framework and a practical design method. Rather than beginning with a predetermined architectural solution, the design process emerges through direct engagement with site conditions, including walking through Barry Curtis Park, identifying edible or invasive plant species, collecting clay deposits, and observing seasonal changes in vegetation and landscape use.



Figure 30.
Jessica Zhang,
Wild Radish,
photograph,
Barry Curtis Park,
Winter 2025

Figure 31.
Jessica Zhang,
Flowering and Seeding Shepherds Purse,
photograph,
Barry Curtis,
Spring 2025





Figure 32.
Jessica Zhang,
Flowering Mallow,
photograph,
Barry Curtis Park,
Summer 2026

Figure 33.
Jessica Zhang,
Signs of Foraged Spikey Puha,
photograph,
Barry Curtis Park,
Autumn 2025





Figure 34. Jessica Zhang, Embodied Foraging Methodology Development, Design Practice Presentation, 2025

This approach challenges anthropocentric design paradigms that position human needs as dominant.³⁸ Concepts such as kaitiakitanga, which emphasise care and responsibility for the environment, inform the ethical positioning of this research and guide design decisions through frameworks such as the Te Aranga Design Principles.³⁹

In practical terms, embodied foraging combines physical and metaphorical foraging practices within the design process. Physical foraging includes activities such as gathering wild plants, collecting clay from Barry Curtis Park, and participating in reciprocal site care practices such as litter removal and the harvest of wild edible weeds. In parallel, observational foraging attends to the ephemeral: seasonal transitions, chance encounters, the informal spatial practices of park users. These become not background context but substantive design knowledge, irreducible to conventional site analysis. Through these practices, the research draws on theories of material agencies, where materials actively participate in shaping design outcomes. Ingold describes this as a “dance of agency,” where makers and materials respond to one another through an unfolding process of engagement.⁴⁰

38 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

39 The Te Aranga Design Principles were developed by Ngā Aho in 2005 as a Māori approach to urban design in Aotearoa New Zealand, in response to the Urban Design Protocol. They provide a framework for recognising Māori values, identity, and relationships to place within urban design and have been used by Auckland Council to support engagement with Mana Whenua in urban development contexts. In this research, the principles provide a point of reference for considering how Māori relationships to place might inform the design process, particularly in questioning anthropocentric approaches to the built environment.

“Te Aranga Principles,” December 30, 2025, <https://www.auckland-designmanual.co.nz/en/places-and-spaces/maori-design/te-aran-ga-principles.html>.

40 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

SITE TOPOANALYSIS

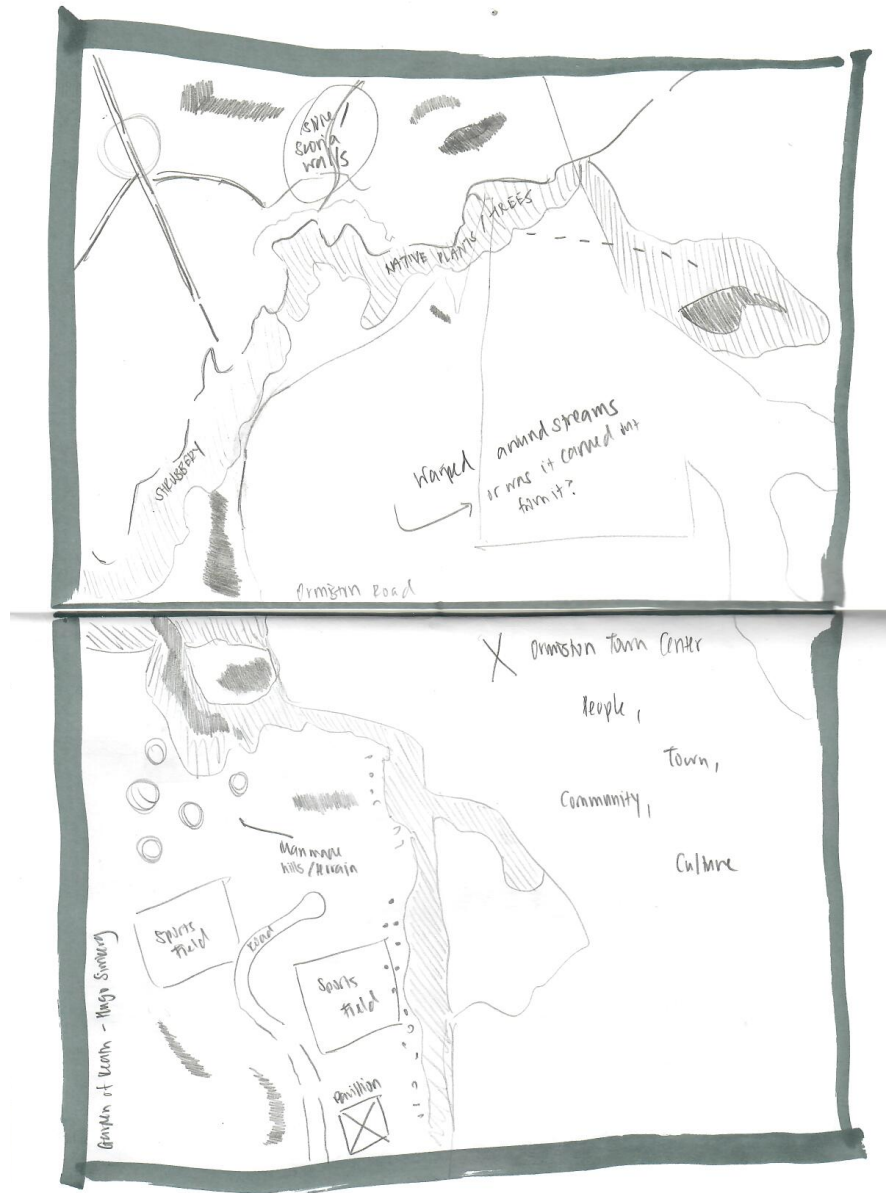


Figure 35. Jessica Zhang, Topoanalysis Mapping, documentative sketch, 2025

Engagement with Barry Curtis Park in this research begins through embodied encounters with landscape, where walking, observing and foraging operate as methods of understanding place. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s concept of topoanalysis – “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives”⁴¹ – the site is explored through sensory and experiential engagement rather than purely technical analysis. Within this framework, space is understood through memory, perception, and bodily presence, revealing the subjective and emotional dimensions through which landscapes are encountered.

Barry Curtis Park is read as layered terrain where human and more-than-human agencies intersect. Following Itai Palti’s understanding of spatial dialogues as practices that communicate often intangible histories embedded within landscapes,⁴² the analysis combines phenomenological observation with embodied foraging. Repeated visits to the park throughout the study enabled the documentation of seasonal changes, patterns of human activity, and the presence of flora, fauna, and material traces across the site. These encounters were documented through mapping, sketching, photographic documentation, and written reflections, allowing subjective spatial experiences – such as feelings of enclosure, openness, intimacy, and transition – to be examined alongside ecological processes. Particular attentions were given to the dialectic between “inside” and “outside” described by Bachelard, where interior spaces evoke intimacy and imagination while exterior landscapes invite exploration and encounter.

⁴¹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 30.

⁴² Palti, “Topolinguistics.”

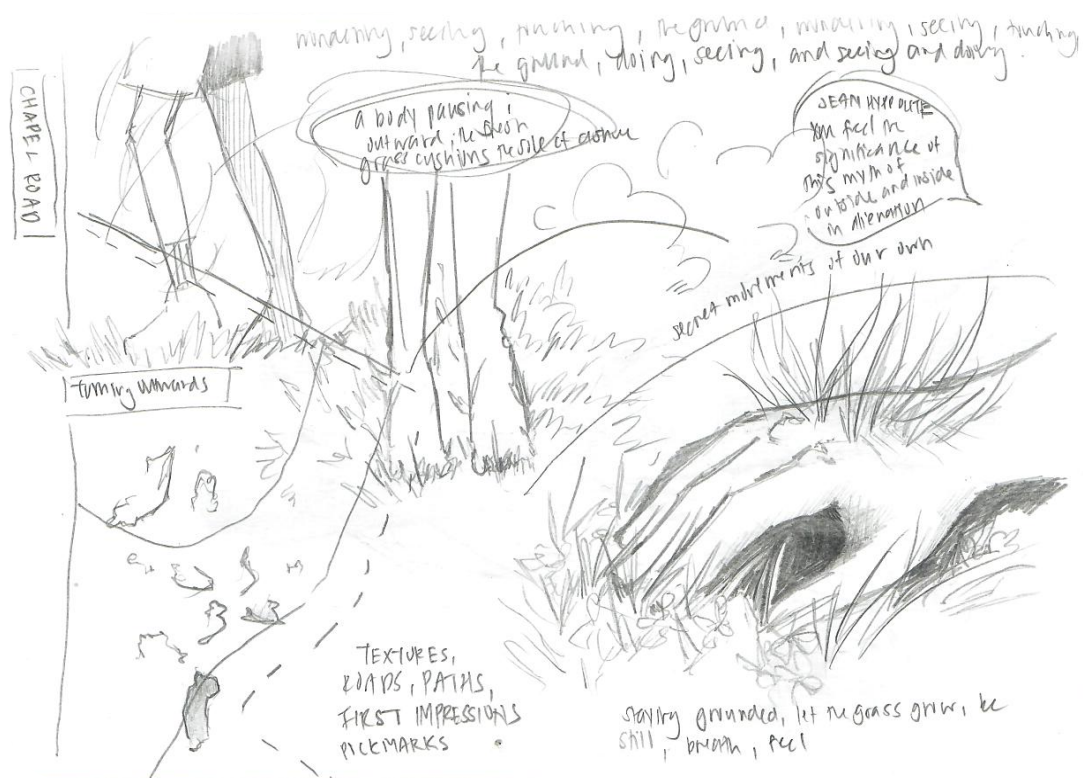


Figure 36. Jessica Zhang, Topoanalysis Mapping, documentative sketch, 2025

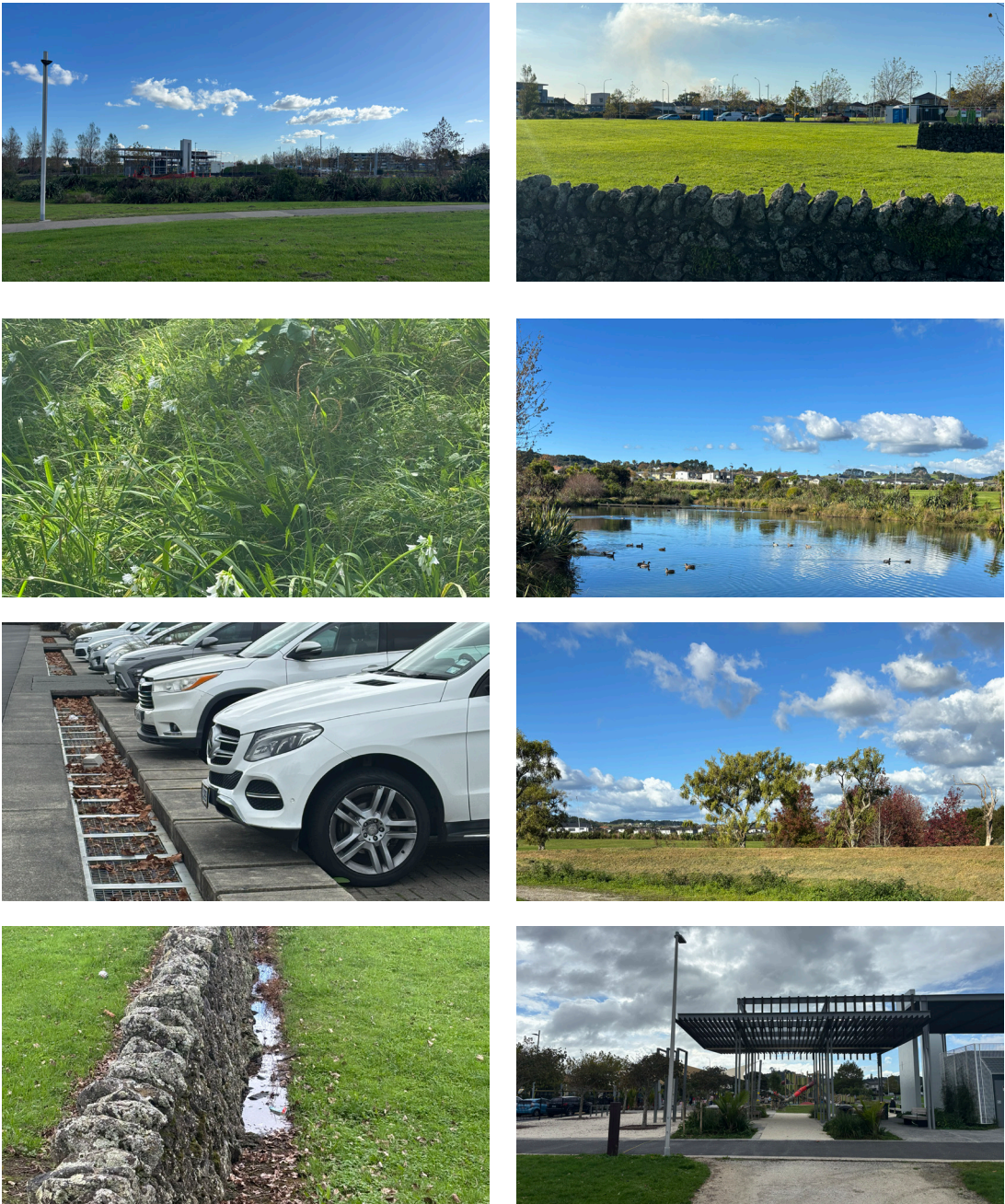


Figure 37. Jessica Zhang, Barry Curtis Throughout the Seasons (Summer to Winter), photographic sequence, 2025

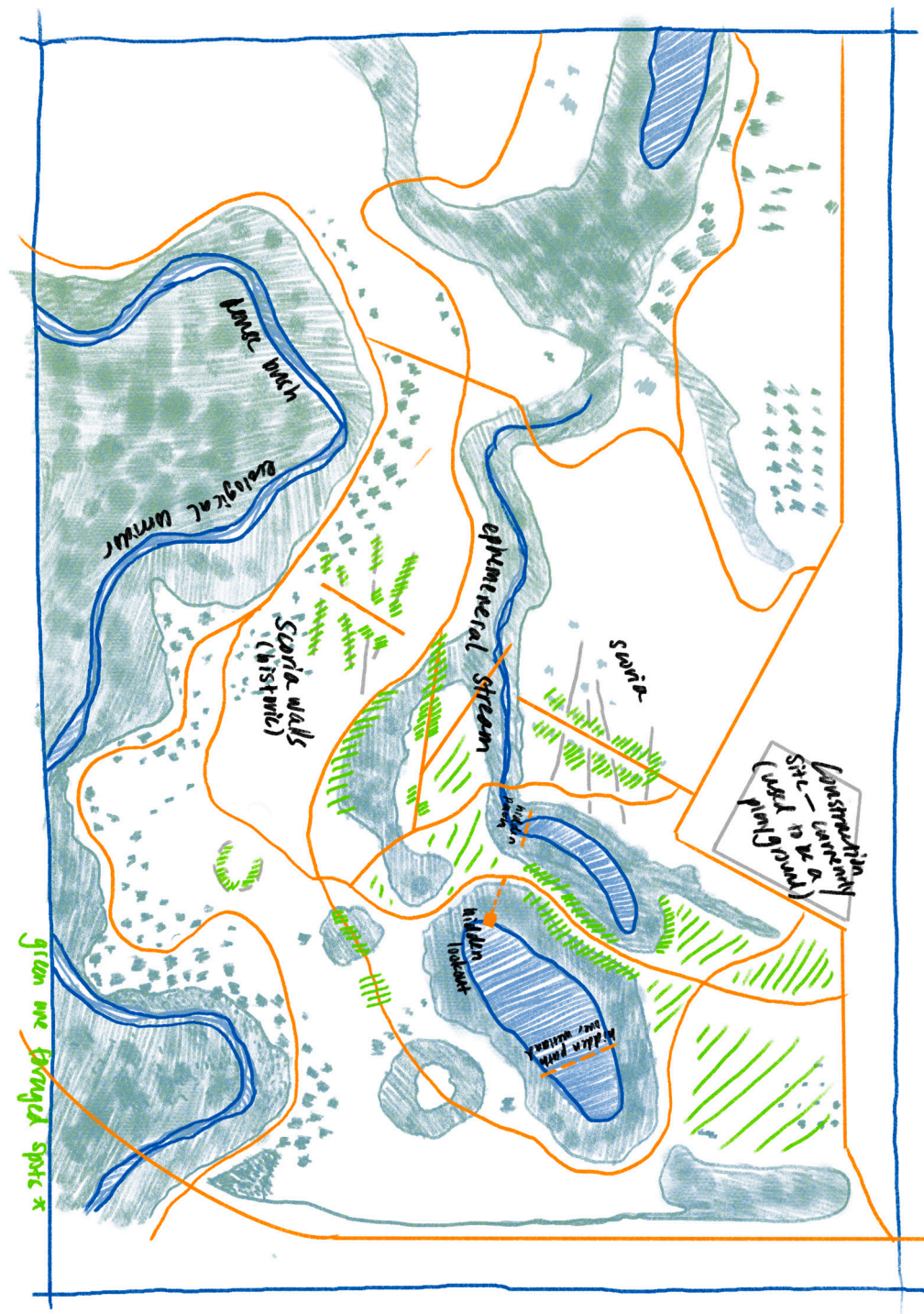


Figure 38. Jessica Zhang,
Edible landscapes,
mapping,
2025

Mapping traced movements through the site along informal and intuitive paths, recording moments of pause, density, and encounter rather than fixed geography.

Sketching focused on edges and ground conditions, registering how the body negotiated shifts between grassland, wetland, and constructed elements.

Photographs captured transient conditions such as light, weather, traces of use, while written reflections documented sensory impressions and temporal changes across repeated visits.

Edible landscape mapping, the identification of invasive species and the collection of site materials such as clay and plant matter further reveal how Barry Curtis Park operates as an assemblage of human activity, ecological processes, and material traces of disturbance and regeneration.

MATERIAL PRAXIS

Material praxis within this research explores how making with site-derived materials can function as a form of spatial inquiry. Drawing on Tim Ingold’s understanding of making as a process of “correspondence” between maker and material,⁴³ ceramic experimentation is used as a method to engage with the material conditions of Barry Curtis Park. Clay foraged directly from the site becomes an active participant in the design process, allowing its geological and environmental characteristics to inform the development of spatial and material ideas.

Foraging clay from the disrupted landscape of Barry Curtis Park revealed a material embedded with traces of its environment – iron-rich seams, fragments of construction debris, and varied textures shaped by the park’s ecological and urban histories. Rather than imposing predetermined forms, the ceramic process became a negotiation; material qualities guiding formal outcomes, the clay asserting its own agency. Through repeated experimentation, including processing clay, wheel throwing, hand-building, and firing tests, the clay responded unpredictably through cracking, warping, and mineral reactions. Within the framework of embodied foraging, these irregularities are understood not as flaws but as records of material dialogue between the clay, its environment and the maker.



Figure 39.
Jessica Zhang,
Coil testing Foraged Clay,
photograph,
2025

⁴³ Ingold, Making.



Figure 40.
Jessica Zhang,
Foraged Clay Bisque and Glaze Fire Test Rings,
photograph,
2025



Figure 41. Jessica Zhang, Fresh Foraged Clay From Construction Site, photograph, 2025

Figure 42. Jessica Zhang, Fragment of Foraged Clay, photograph, 2025

This understanding of clay as an active and temporal participant in the making process positions material not as static or resolved, but as something continually unfolding in the present. While writing specifically on porcelain, Edmund de Waal articulates a broader condition of ceramic making as a temporal and embodied process:

“Porcelain is China. Porcelain is the journey to China. It is the same when picking up this Chinese porcelain bowl from the twelfth century. The bowl was made in Jingdezhen, thrown then moulded with a flower in a deep well, unglazed rim, green, grey with a slightly pooled glaze, some issues as the dealers would say, chips, marks, scuffs. It happens in the present tense, and it is, itself, a continuous present of active, dynamic movements, judgements and decisions. It doesn’t feel in the past, and it feels wrong to force it into one just to obey a critical orthodoxy. This bowl was made by someone I didn’t know, in conditions that I can only imagine, for functions that I may have got wrong.”⁴⁴

This framing reinforces how the foraged clay of Barry Curtis Park operates not as a neutral resource, but as a temporal and relational medium – recording interactions between landscape, material processes, and embodied making.

The ceramic practice extends beyond object-making, operating as a mode of attunement to the site. The resulting ceramic experiments informed the conceptual development of functional ceramic vessels for the Forager’s Hut – particularly a functional tea set, intended as a pedagogical device for facilitating communal foraging practices. Designed for preparing and sharing foraged herbal teas and tinctures, the vessels encourage collective engagement with edible landscapes and seasonal plant knowledge within Barry Curtis Park. In this way, the ceramic objects operate spatially as mediators between human and more-than-human worlds, embodying the ethic of reciprocal care central to foraging philosophies.

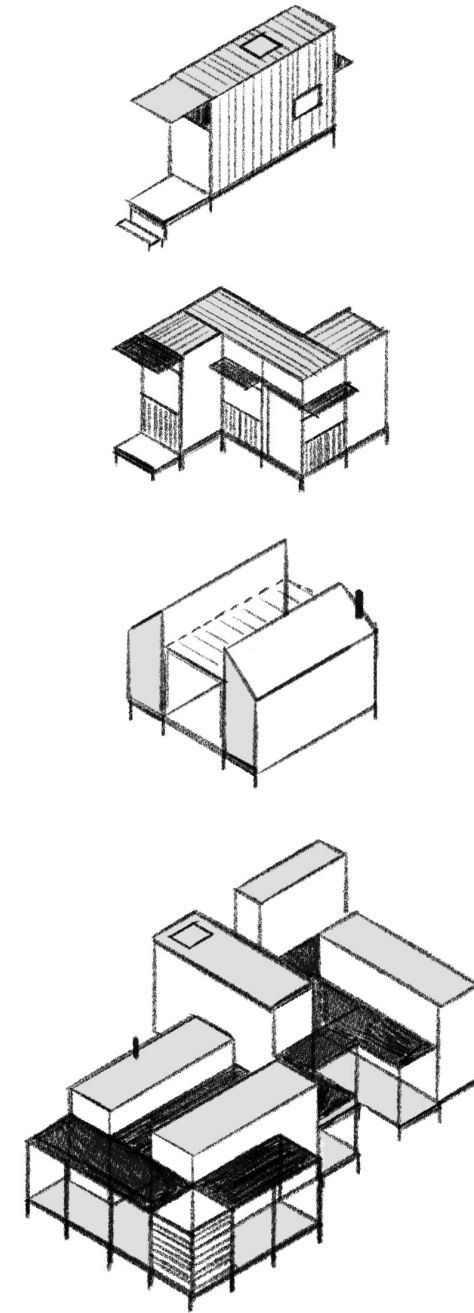
Grounded in slow design and ethical materialism, material praxis reframes sustainability not as a fixed outcome but as an ongoing negotiation with time, where making becomes a process of correspondence between body, material, and landscape.⁴⁵

41 Edmund De Waal, *The White Road: Journey into an Obsession*, First American edition. (New York: Farrar, 2015), 11.

45 De Waal, *The White Road*.

SPATIAL DESIGN, THE FORAGER'S HUT

Spatial Design within this research is explored through the conceptual development of a temporary Forager's Hut, investigated through sketches and a series of iterative spatial studies constructed from recycled and readily available materials. The hut is conceived as an evolving spatial framework that can adapt to different sites and ecological conditions, reflecting Anna Tsing's understanding of landscapes as dynamic assemblages of human and more-than-human relations.⁴⁶ I was inspired by the materially resourceful and community-oriented work of Assemble Studio, particularly projects such as *Yardhouse*⁴⁷ and *Theatre on the Fly*,⁴⁸ where modular construction, reused materials, and participatory building processes enable architecture to be assembled, adapted, and reconfigured over time. In these projects, structures emerge through incremental making and collective labour rather than fixed design resolution. Drawing from these strategies, the design process prioritises modular construction and adaptable spatial arrangements that allow the architecture to respond to changing landscapes and communal needs.



⁴⁶ Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

⁴⁷ "Yardhouse," Assemble, <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/yardhouse>

⁴⁸ "Theatre on the Fly," Assemble, <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/theatre-on-the-fly>.

Figure 43. Jessica Zhang, Tracking of the Forager's Hut's Conception, digital isometric sketch, 2026

For copyright purposes this
image has been removed.

Figure 44.
Assemble Studios,
Theatre on the Fly,
photograph,
2012

Figure 45.
Assemble Studios,
Yardhouse,
photograph,
2014

For copyright purposes this
image has been removed.

The development of the hut also responds to the crisis of interiority identified earlier in this research. Architectural thresholds reintroduce moments of pause, movement, and separation between activities, responding to Gaston Bachelard’s understanding of spatial thresholds as mediators between intimacies of the inside and the vastness of the outside. Through conceptual sketching, model making, and iterative spatial studies, I investigated how small-scale structures and transitional spaces might prompt reconnection with the outside.⁴⁹ Model making, in particular, operates at the scale of the hand, allowing spatial ideas to be tested through physical assembly and reinforcing the idea of mobility. Working with frames, panels, and lightweight components, these studies explored how elements might be constructed, connected, and anchored to the ground, while remaining portable and adaptable across different sites.

The temporary nature of the Forager’s Hut reflects the ethics of the honourable harvest, where engagement with land is guided by respect, reciprocity, and restraint. Through modelling I arrived at the idea that the encampment would ultimately leave behind a small pavilion designed for the community to continue gathering within the park. Once the temporary hut elements are removed, the pavilion remains as a shared spatial marker – a place for rest, conversation, and ongoing engagement with the surrounding landscape.

In this way, the Forager’s Hut operates as a catalyst for spatial dialogue. The modular structures support embodied practices of foraging, observation, and communal learning, while also accommodating the rhythms of weather and season – providing shelter when conditions prevent outdoor engagement, spaces for processing gathered materials, and thresholds where human and more-than-human interactions unfold. The design therefore translates the embodied foraging methodology into architectural form, proposing a spatial framework that evolves with place while fostering reciprocal relationships between people, materials, and landscape.



Figure 46.
Jessica Zhang,
Matchstick Prototyping
of Hut Components,
photographic composite,
2025

⁴⁹ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

Section IV.

Practice Journal: Encounters in the Field

The following section documents key moments in the development of this research through a reflective journal of pivotal moments in the practice. Rather than presenting the design outcomes as a linear progression toward a final architectural solution, it traces evolving encounters, observations, and material experiments that shaped the Forager's Hut and its associated artefacts. These moments reveal how the contexts and methods outlined in the previous chapter – embodied foraging, topoanalysis, material praxis, and spatial design – unfolded through day-to-day practice.

FORAGING AND MAPPING ENCOUNTERS

During my visits to Barry Curtis Park, I observed seasonal changes while locating edible or invasive plant species growing throughout the park. Photography and sketching became key methods of documentation; capturing plants, ground textures, water edges, and built structures encountered along the way.

These recordings were not only intended to catalogue physical features of the landscape, but also to register how the park revealed itself through small moments of encounter – attempting to capture how the landscape felt through bodily presence and movement.

Rather than approaching the site as a fixed composition to be analysed from a distance, knowledge was produced through movement, proximity, and repeated encounters with the landscape. Foraging required a heightened attentiveness to what could be reached, gathered, or recognised, shifting the act of mapping from visual documentation to a multisensory and bodily engagement with space. Decisions about where to stop, what to touch, and what to collect began to inform how space was understood – not as a static arrangement of elements, but as a series of lived conditions unfolding over time.

Over time, these drawings and photographs formed a growing archive of encounters. Patterns gradually began to emerge within the site. Invasive plants such as bristly ox-tongue repeatedly appeared along thresholds between grassland and bush edges, while certain clearings functioned as informal pauses for visitors moving through the park.

These observations revealed how the park operates as a layered assemblage of human activity, ecological processes, and material traces of disturbance and regeneration. By recording the subjective and emotional dimensions of moving through the park, the mapping process began to reveal subtle relationships between interior intimacy and exterior openness.

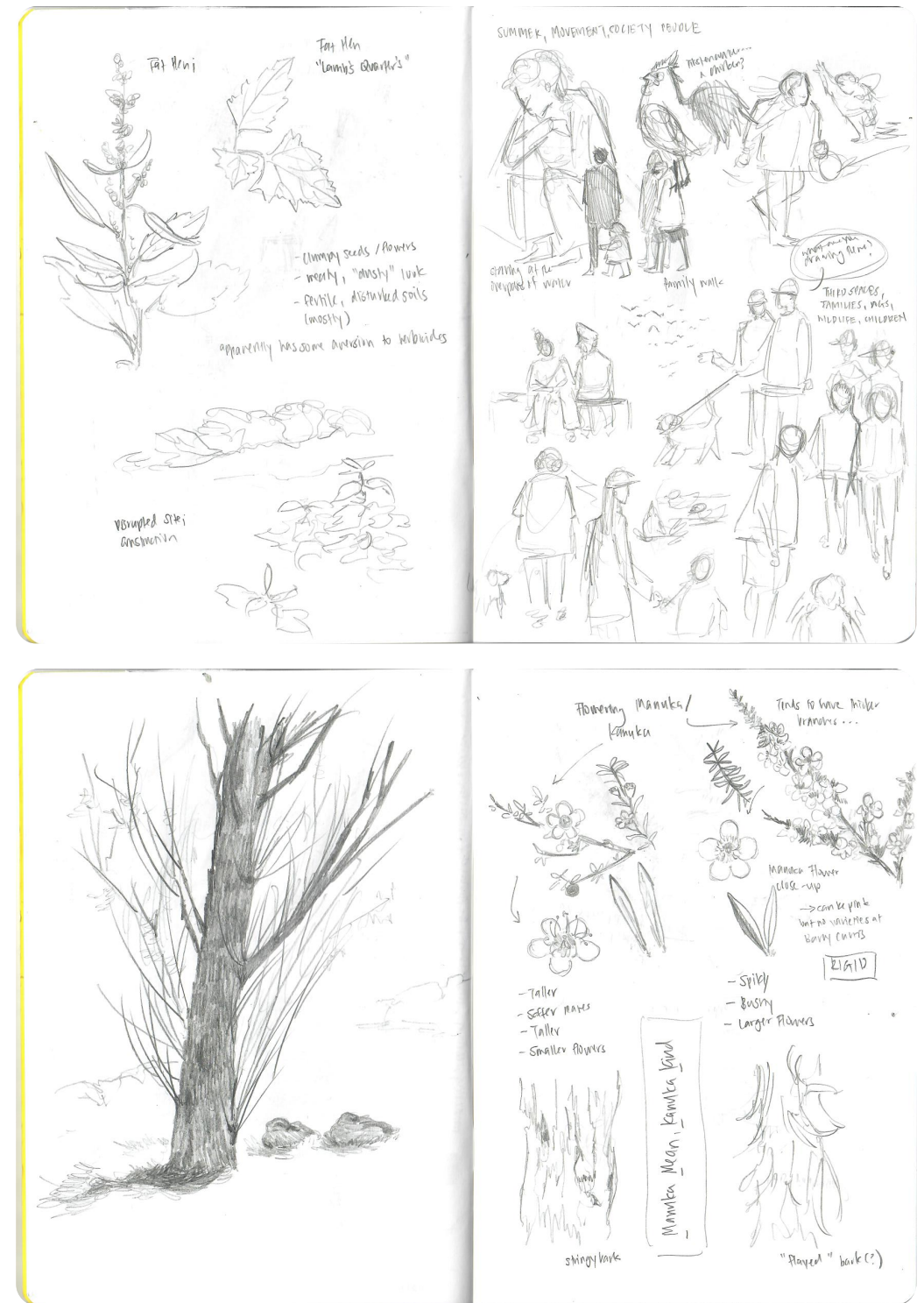


Figure 47. Jessica Zhang, Foraging and Mapping Encounters, sketchbook, 2025

Figure 48. Jessica Zhang, Foraging and Mapping Encounters, sketchbook, 2025

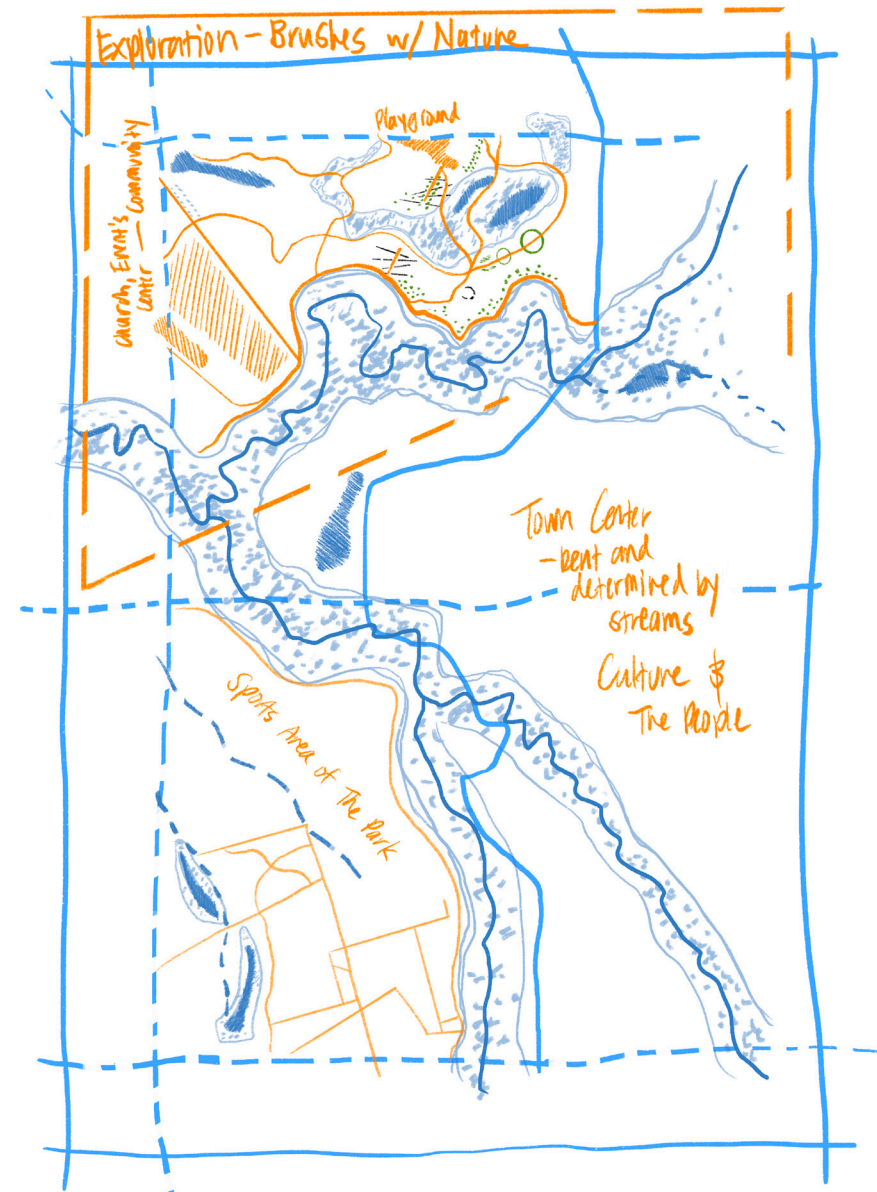
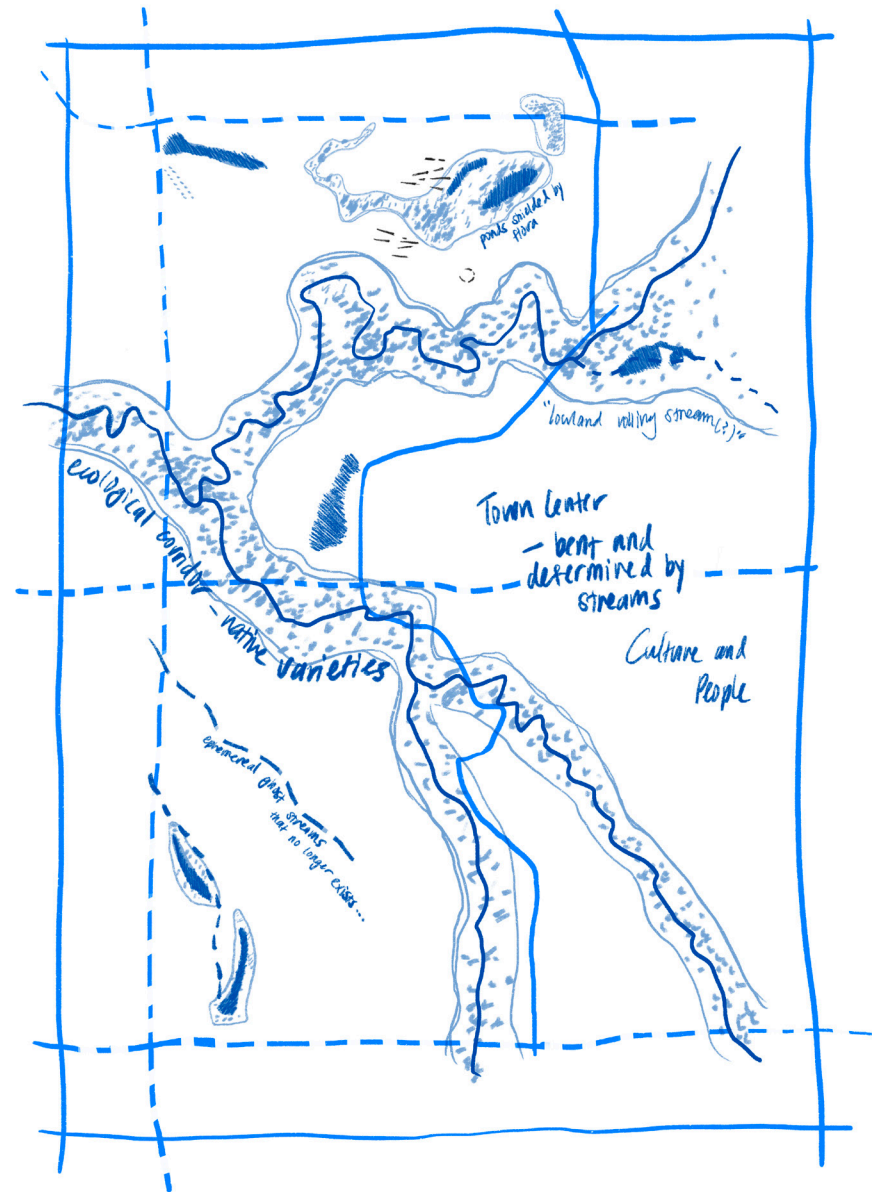


Figure 49.
 Jessica Zhang,
 Topoanalysis Interpretation, mapping, 2025

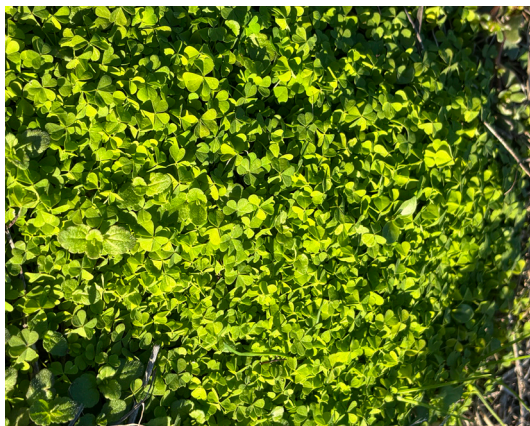
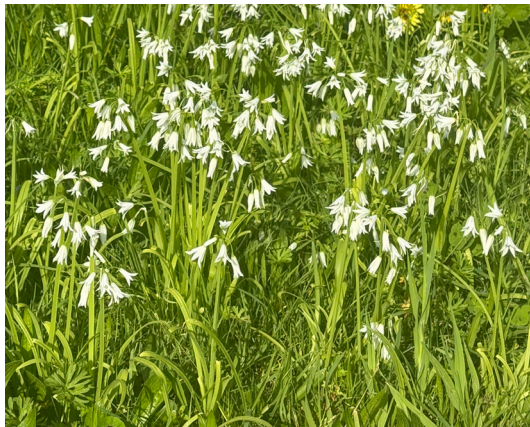


Figure 50. Jessica Zhang, Spring Invasive Foraging Favourites,
photographic collection, 2025



Figure 51. Jessica Zhang, Scoria Wall Study,
watercolour sketch, 2025



Figure 52. Jessica Zhang, Waters Edge of Barry Curtis,
watercolour sketch, 2025

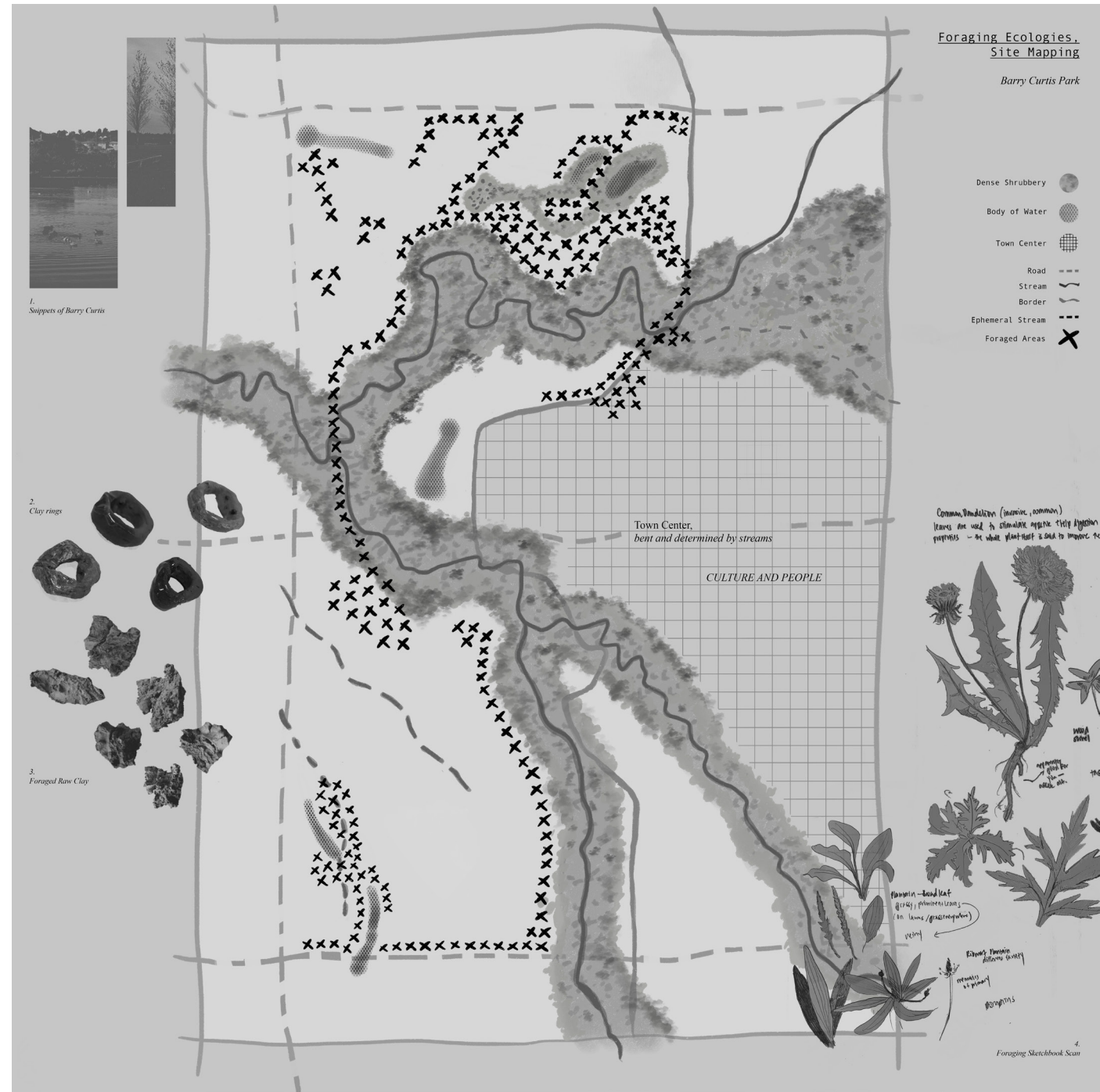


Figure 53. Jessica Zhang, Foraging Encounters: Site Map,
Barry Curtis Park, 2026

FORAGING MATERIALITIES: Ceramic Experiments and Material Artefacts

As my engagement with the site deepened, the research shifted from observing landscape conditions to gathering materials directly from it. Through foraging plants and gathering clay from the Barry Curtis Park playground construction site, where disturbance had exposed layers of soil beneath the surface, I extended the embodied foraging methodology into material experimentation. Each collection was accompanied by notes documenting where the material was found, its condition, and the surrounding ecological context.

Clay became the most significant material I encountered during this process. Deposits appeared in areas of erosion and construction excavation, revealing layers of soil embedded with small stones, fragments of concrete, and variations in colour and texture that reflected the park's geological and urban histories. With permission and assistance from construction workers on site, I gathered small quantities of clay and transported them to the studio for experimentation.

Processing the clay involved several stages, including drying, dissolving, sieving, and preparing the material for testing. Through this process I began to understand the clay's highly variable composition, including mineral inclusions and unpredictable textures that influences how the material behaved during forming and firing. These behaviours – cracking, warping, and mineral reactions – challenged initial expectations of control, shifting the process away from refinement toward responsiveness.



Figure 54: Jessica Zhang, Kneading Processed Foraged Clay, photograph, 2025



Figure 55. Jessica Zhang, cracked embedded wild clay, photograph, 2025

Figure 56. Jessica Zhang, harvested clay, photograph, 2025

Figure 57. Jessica Zhang, dissolving wild clay, photograph, 2025

Figure 58. Jessica Zhang, recycling clay preparation, photograph, 2025

Figure 59. Jessica Zhang, mineral shards in foraged Clay, photograph, 2025

Alongside these clay experiments, I explored other material possibilities through paper making. These paper experiments emerged from an excess of dried foraged matter and paper litter accumulated throughout the Master’s design practice course, both from my own work and that of my cohort, prompting a reuse of what was already at hand. Plant fibres gathered from the park were incorporated into handmade paper to investigate how organic materials might carry the memory of the landscape into design artefacts, embedding traces of the site directly into the surface.



Figure 60. Jessica Zhang, paper pulp, photograph, 2025



Figure 61. Jessica Zhang, papermaking, photograph, 2025



Figure 62. Jessica Zhang, handmade paper, photograph, 2025

Through these experiments, the materials revealed their own tendencies and resistances. Rather than correcting these irregularities, I began to treat them as records of an ongoing dialogue between landscape, material, and maker. This marked a shift in the research, where making became less about producing predetermined outcomes and more about responding to the conditions of the material and site. The clay experiments gradually developed into the making of ceramic vessels intended for use within the Forager's Hut. I conceived these vessels as both functional and pedagogical devices for preparing and sharing foraged teas, as well as for displaying gathered wildflowers. Initial ceramic tests included hand-built vessels, wheel-thrown forms, and ceramic tiles used to explore glaze reactions and structural behaviour during firing.

Through this iterative process, a series of vessels began to emerge – including cups, teapots, mugs, bowls, vases, and coasters – designed to support everyday rituals of gathering and sharing within the hut. Many pieces retained irregularities caused by mineral inclusions, warping during firing, or variations in glaze behaviour. Rather than treating these outcomes as technical failures, I embraced them as expressions of the clay's geological memory.



Figure 63. Jessica Zhang, Glaze and Bisque Test Clay Rings, photograph, 2025



Figure 64. Jessica Zhang, Chipped cup prototype resituated as a vase, photograph, 2025



Figure 65. Jessica Zhang,
Ceramic artefact
design,
sketch
2025

Figure 66. Jessica Zhang,
Teapot Testing with Dad,
video still,
2025



Figure 67. Jessica Zhang,
Ceramic Vessels,
photograph,
2026

Figure 68. Jessica Zhang,
Ceramic artefact design,
sketch
2025

The resulting ceramic artefacts function both as practical objects and symbolic devices within the project. Fingerprints, textured surfaces inspired by natural forms, mineral stains, and subtle irregularities remain visible on each piece, documenting embodied labour.

DOCUMENTATION

Alongside experimentation, gathering and foraging practices, writing became an additional method for documenting and exploring the spatial life of the Forager's Hut. Short narrative texts were written to imagine how a forager might move through daily routines within the hut and surround landscape. Narratives emerged through reflections on time spent in Barry Curtis Park observing people, shifting weather patterns, and seasonal plant cycles, often in contrast with my own daily routines spent predominantly indoors within a corporate working environment. Writing became a way of translating these observations into imagined scenarios that describe slow and intentional everyday activities, such as gathering herbs, drying leaves, walking through the park to forage, and preparing meals with collected ingredients.

The writing process unfolded through journaling sessions, field notes, and short poetic fragments, attempting to capture the rhythms of embodied practices within landscape. These texts describe moments of attentiveness to the ground, plants, and seasonal change, contrasting the quiet intimacy of working with land against the accelerated rhythms of contemporary life.

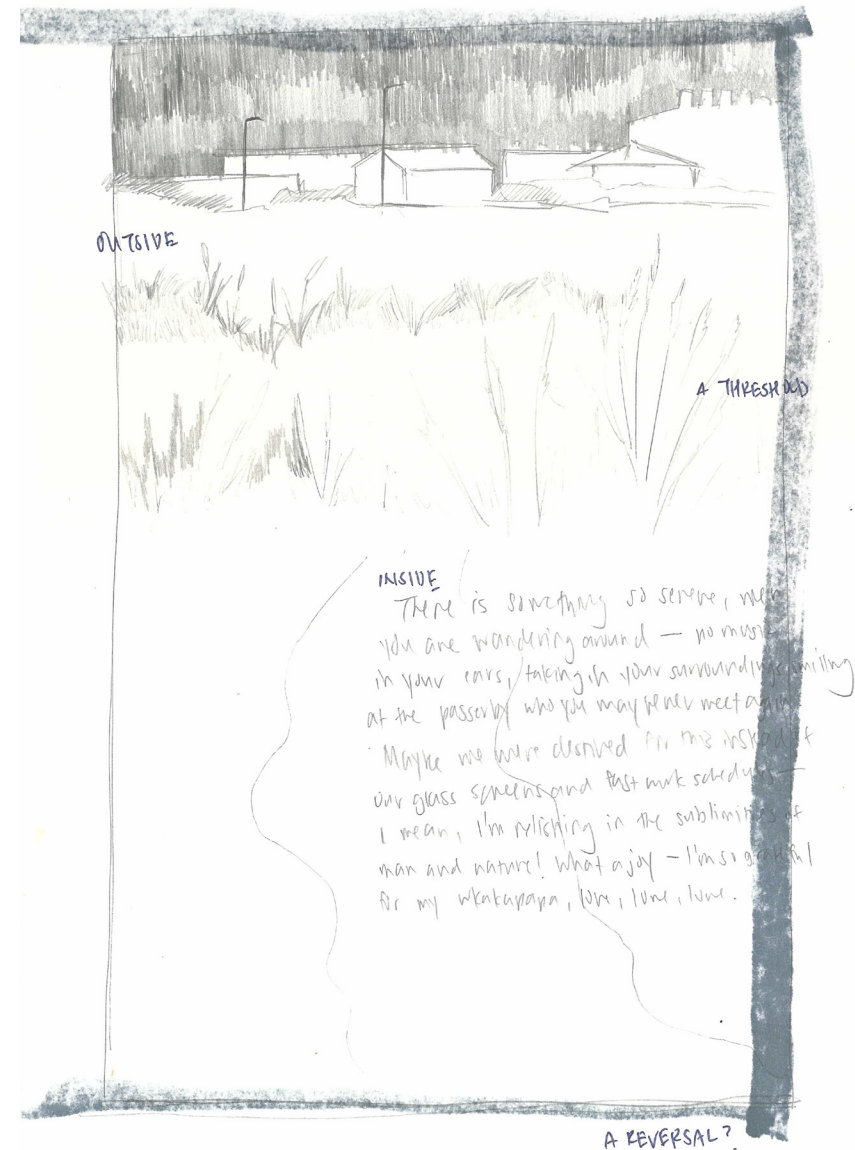


Figure 69. Jessica Zhang, Narrative Scroll Prototype, scan, 2025



The narrative scroll developed from these encounters, moves between observation and imagination, describing moments of attentiveness to the ground, plants, weather, and seasonal change. It follows the gradual inhabitation of the Forager's Hut, from its initial assembly and unfamiliarity to routines of tending, making, gathering, hosting, and sharing. In doing so, the writing became a means of exploring how time, repetition, and everyday practices might transform a temporary structure into a place of familiarity and belonging. At the same time, the narratives became a form of personal dreaming, allowing me to imagine an alternative way of living shaped by slower rhythms, closer attention to landscape, and everyday acts of gathering, making, and dwelling.

Over time, these temporal narratives began to operate as a form of programme. Rather than defining the project through a fixed program of functional spaces, the design was shaped by imagining sequences of action and routine. This approach enabled the hut to accommodate multiple functions, adapt over time, and leave traces behind as the encampment moved.

Through these imagined routines, the Forager's Hut gradually appeared less as a fixed architectural object and more as a spatial condition.

Figure 70. Jessica Zhang,
Narrative Scroll in studio,
photograph,
2025

AN ETUDE TO SLOW LIVING

narrative scroll

Wake up – it’s a big day today.

Freshen up – it’s a new beginning today.

Breakfast – you’ll need the energy.

Get ready – deep breath, make sure you’ve got everything!

Travel – watch as your scenery blurs from grey to green.

Arrive – stretch your legs, greet your new home with a smile,
as the others get to work.
*(let yourself explore the area,
to get to know roughly which critters exist here,
to get to know where the dandelions grow here,
to greet the native plants here,
or to get to know some new faces that frequent the park.)*

Meander back – brimming with excitement

Lunch – share stories with the people helping to assemble your new home.

Help – the job is done faster with all hands on deck!

“Assemble” – all the pieces are ready, all the components have arrived; the puzzle just needs to be put together!
*(you know the pavilion fits like a puzzle, as you all work together to join them.
you know all you have to do after the deck and louvres are fitted is to settle in.
you know you have all the bare necessities you need to survive,
and all you need to do is move them in from your car.
you know this is your new and exciting home for the month.)*

Move in – your friends help you transfer your bits and pieces from your car to your shelves, cabinets, and fridge; how lovely.

Locate – the pre-fabricated parts arrive and settle down around the half made deck.

Housewarming – you’ll never tire of this, sharing food and drinks outside and marvelling at the now half-built foraging ‘encampment’.

Clean up – even the sunset feels new as you perch on the skeleton of the deck.

Set up – you are missing a few pieces in the bedroom (namely the bed), you must tent tonight.

Gaze – the stars are shining at you and the skeleton of the encampment tonight.

Sleep.

Wake up – you are woken up by the builders who have come to help you finish building your temporary residence.

Breakfast – share lots of coffee and toast on the grass as you chat about the progress

Shower – soothe your weary bones from sleeping on the earth

Receive – your furniture arrives today (no more sleeping outside!)

Move in (again) – first the bed, then your favourite armchair, then your table...

Settle in – you’ve worked up a sweat, putting this there... putting that there...

Explore – follow the path, follow the native and wild flora that dots landscape.
*(note where specific weeds are,
note the critters which habitate the area,
greet the native land here,
“Kia ora! Hello! I’ll be here for a bit, please take care of me!
And I’ll take care of you”.)*

Check in – you’ve asked for your “plant nursery” to be completed first, and it has been!

Shop – prepare for the month ahead, pick up some seeds or plants, and maybe stock some treats for yourself!

Return – drop some snacks off to the builders

Work – settle down in your now furnished, completed temporary residence.
*(adjust to the new weight of things,
the way furniture anchors you differently than before.)*

Tend – begin with the nursery, loosen the soil, water lightly.
(you don’t quite know what will take, but you plant anyway.)

Arrange – tools here, seeds there, routines beginning to form.

Host – the builders linger, tea turns into conversation again.

Thank – their work, their time, their presence in shaping this place.

Alone – the quiet arrives slowly.

Listen – the structure creaks, the park hums, something shifts.

Cook – something simple, something warm.

Eat – inside this time.

Notice – how different it feels to sit at a table.

Step out – twilight settles across the clearing.

Walk – not to explore, but to check in.
*(the dandelions are still there,
the same critters pass through,
the land remembers you, just a little.)*

Water – what you planted earlier.

Hope – it holds.

Return – your space holds you now.

Adjust – a chair closer to the window, a blanket folded just so.

Write – or sketch, or simply think.

Dim – light softens against the walls you helped complete.

Rest – not from exhaustion, but from fullness.

Lie down – in your bed this time.

Feel – the difference.

Sleep – held, sheltered, beginning to belong.

Wake up – the lovely early sun pools into your hut.

Freshen up – the cool breeze from the corridor seeps through.

Breakfast – spread your ceramic collection over the kitchen bench.

Ground yourself – sit on your new porch with your coffee.

Get ready – grab your mapping materials, field handbooks and a notebook from youshelves.

Explore – let your legs lead you,
whether you follow the road or go off from the ‘course’.
*(let yourself map where specific weeds are,
to get to know which critters exist here,
to get to know which native plants grow here,
to listen to the birdsong,
or to invite people who frequent the park for your foraging course.)*

Meander back – your encampment invites you.

Lunch – eat a sandwich on your porch as you gaze out into nature.

Sort – sit and ponder from newly gained knowledge

“Forage” – terrain, flora and fauna have told you
much about your new environments.
*(perhaps you can do an introductory course on wild edible plants,
Is it time to advertise and put up flyers around the park?
The soil seems fertile here; perhaps you’ll start on replanting?
you should definitely test the clay around the deposit you found...)*

Document – cross-referencing, with the myriad of books you have stored.

Tidy – clean up and sort!

Dinner – you stare out the window as your dinner simmers on the stove,
and meander back and forth from the kitchen to the ‘dining table’.

Work through – both your dishes and your scrawled paperwork
on the generous table.

Settle in – gazing out into the view from your bed.

Wake up – rain taps softly against the louvres.

Freshen up – the cold damp air clings to your skin.

Pause – today moves slower.

Breakfast – steam curls from your mug into the grey morning light.

Listen – the roof crackles, gutters murmur, puddles slowly gather outside.

“Rain” – the park transforms underwater.
*(the paths soften into mud,
the leaves shine darker than before,
the birds quieten.
the scent of earth rises around you.)*

Wait – leaning against the kitchen bench, watching drops race down the window.

Notice – how differently the pavilion breathes today.
*(the timber swells slightly,
the canvas shifts with the wind,
the corridors funnel cool mist through the structure.)*

Step out – barefoot onto the wet deck.

Feel – cold rain gathers at your fingertips along the handrail.

Collect – rainwater into buckets and basins for the nursery.

Check – which plants thrive in the storm, which bend too heavily beneath it.

Adjust – move seedlings deeper beneath shelter.

“Forage” – but differently this time.
*(perhaps mushrooms emerge overnight from damp bark,
perhaps kawakawa leaves bead with rainwater,
perhaps clay grows richer and softer beneath your boots.)*

Return – clothes damp, cheeks cold, arms full.

Dry – herbs beside the kitchen window.

Hang – jackets, socks, and tea towels wherever warmth reaches.

Cook – something slow and heavy.
*(perhaps soup thick with foraged greens,
perhaps bread warming beside the stove,
perhaps tea brewed from herbs dried weeks before.)*

Gather – cushions, blankets, notebooks onto the floor near the warmest corner.

Read – rain encourages stillness.

Write – thoughts become quieter here.

“Shelter” – the pavilion reveals its purpose in weather like this.
*(not only protecting you from rain,
but allowing you to experience it gently,
to hear it, smell it, follow it across the site without fear.)*

Dim – afternoon dissolves early into evening.

Light – a lamp, a candle, the small glow of interior warmth against the storm.

Listen – rain on timber, rain on soil, rain on leaves, rain on roof.

Rest – held gently inside the weather.

Sleep – while the storm carries on around you.

Wake up – greet the morning.

Freshen up – open yourself to new days and new beginnings.

Breakfast – start your day right.

Get ready – deep breath, prepare for today’s routine.

Go out – fresh air, let nature stimulate you.

“Forage” – slow down and open yourself to welcome surprises
*(maybe you’ll find a wild tangle to harvest,
Or maybe you’ll find a wild clay reserve,
Or maybe you’ll find the perfect autumn leaf for a bookmark).*

Meander home – light and free, take a different path perhaps!

Lunch – fuel to carry on your wondrous day.

Marvel at your gifts – thank the land you traversed, and yourself.

“Preserve” – wallow in nature’s delight,
*(perhaps you’ll journal
about today’s small adventure?
or make syrup from the manuka and dandelion flowers you
foraged today?).*

“Indulge” – the gift of nature,
*(perhaps you’ll make a tea from the kawakawa
you dried last week...
or you’ll make a hearty soup with the nasturtiums and puha...)*

Dinner – make yourself a lovely meal, put on some jazz even!

Lull about – perhaps you’ll read a book, or chat with a loved one?

Cleanse – after a fruitful day, feel your bones drink.

Slumber – rest, you deserve it.

Wake up – the air feels familiar now.

Freshen up – morning routines settle into your body.

Breakfast – tea brewed from what you dried weeks ago.

Inspect – the nursery has changed overnight.

*(some seedlings thrive,
some wilt,
some surprise you entirely.)*

Tend – rotate trays toward the sun, loosen soil, and compost scraps.

Repair – tighten a hinge, replace a warped board, oil the timber bench.

Document – sketch new growth patterns into your notebook.

Cross-reference – compare findings with your field guides and zines.

Experiment – test preserves, dry herbs, fire clay pieces from the deposits you found.

“Cultivate” – the pavilion becomes more than a shelter.

*(perhaps the pathways become softer beneath repeated footsteps,
perhaps the “new” wood smell has disappeared a little,
perhaps neighbours begin stopping to ask questions.)*

Welcome – a passerby pauses at your nursery.

Share – a cutting, a story, a warm drink.

Teach – casually, gently, without performance.

Prepare – reorganise the porch, restock tools, push the stools beneath the table.

Notice – this place no longer feels foreign.

Dinner – windows open, evening breeze through the louvres.

Reflect – on how the land now speaks in familiar patterns.

Rest – tomorrow, others may arrive.

Wake up – they’ll be arriving soon!

Freshen up – splash cold water on your face,
as the cool fresh air wafts into your bathroom.

Prepare – pull out the dining table onto the porch, open a few louvres,
let the sun in...

Spread – from the kitchen pantry to the table! quick, lay out the homemade wild oat bread, infused herb butter, dandelion jam and foraged dried tea!

“Invitation” – fresh faces stand amidst the pavilion,
beaming at you as the sun beams down on them in turn.
*(greet them warmly and establish a connection with a karakia,
meander slowly through your winding structure,
walking them through the loose program today.
break bread and express gratitude for such open and full hearts.)*

Set up – gift introductory zines, loan your trusty equipment and books from your shelves for the foraging course today

Get ready – make sure everyone is ready!
“louvres locked up? let’s go everyone!”.

“Reconnection” – the community wanders through the park with you, and the trees, plants and wildlife are with you also on your winding, unplanned route,
*(they listen intently as you stop every few steps
or so to introduce them to a native plant
or to reconnect them to a common invasive edible weed,
or to taste varieties of wood sorrel,
or to wander and experience chance discoveries for themselves,
or to invite them to harvest a portion of a thicket of dandelions.)*

Wander back – bags are filled with fistfuls of different foraged goods, sprawled across the kitchen table and dining table.

Inspect – marvel at the variety, and also inspect to be sure they are edible varieties (and not lookalikes!)

Demonstrate – washing, rinsing, drying, preserving, cooking, steeping;
done back and forth from kitchen to table, with the community following your every move.

“Gratuity” – to the land for today’s harvests, to the people for opening their heart to you, those around them, and to the land.
*(do you hear your guests laughing on the porch, enjoying dandelion coffee?
do you hear them clamouring on your table to cross-reference their harvests of the day with the myriad of books and zines you’ve sourced?
do you hear them taking turns to browse your foraged pickles, jams and syrups?)*

Farewell – they walk away with smiles on their faces, totes filled with treats from the day

Clean up – happy messes are cleaned and put away above the kitchen bench and under.

Relax – a cup of iced dandelion cold brew as you watch the sunset from your porch, gazing at your thriving plant nursery.

Rest,

Belong,

Continue.

DEVELOPING THE FORAGER'S HUT

The architectural concept of the Forager's Hut gradually emerged from these accumulated encounters with landscape and materials. Rather than beginning with a predetermined architectural form, the hut developed through iterative spatial studies and model making that explored how a dwelling for a hypothetical forager might support embodied practices of gathering, making, resting, and sharing within landscape.

Early iterations of conceptual sketches explored a mobile tiny house that included the necessities for dwelling and foraging, supporting activities such as preparing tea, drying plants, resting and gathering. These drawings focused on relationships between shelter and exposure, considering how the hut might “open up” to the outside rather than functioning as a sealed interior space.

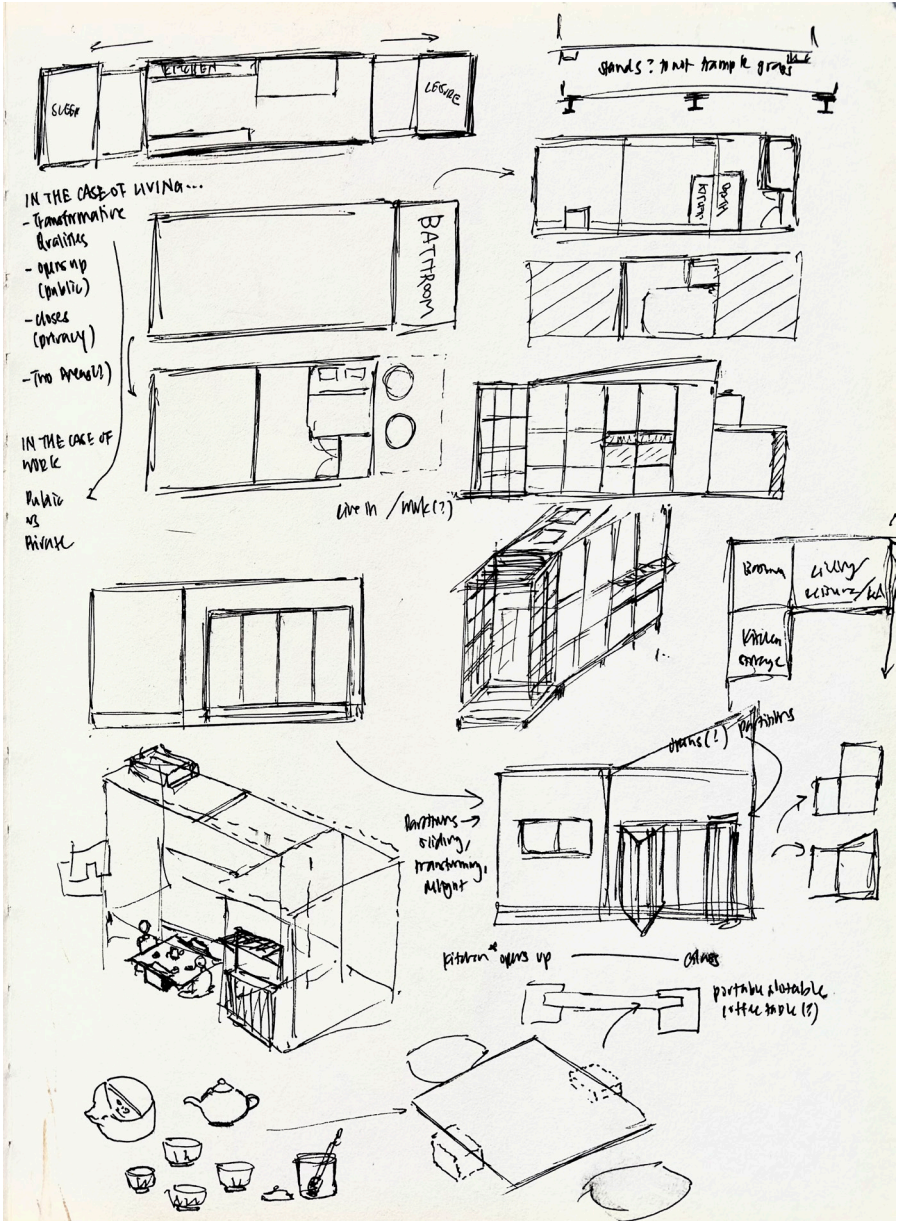


Figure 71. Jessica Zhang, Early Iterations of Hut, Scan, 2025

Model making became important in developing these ideas. Small-scale models were constructed from matchsticks, cardboard, and the hand-made paper produced earlier in the research, allowing the structure of the hut to be explored through physical experimentation. These improvised prototypes allowed spatial relationships to be tested through making rather than abstract planning. Early iterations of the hut followed the logic of compact, self-contained “tiny house”, consolidating functions such as sleeping, cooking, and storage within a singular enclosed form. While this approach initially appeared efficient, it quickly became restrictive; the fixed boundaries limited the potential for the landscape and architecture to breathe, and constrained the more fluid, open-ended practices of foraging, gathering, and communal use that the project sought to support.

These tensions revealed a misalignment between the architectural form and the embodied foraging methodology. Through this process it became clear that the hut’s initial dimensions were too restrictive, and its limitation remained in it simply functioning as a “tiny house”. Subsequently, the hut evolved into a reconfigurable modular configuration composed of smaller structures connected by sheltered thresholds.

The iterative models explored simple structural logics using timber frames, reused materials, and adaptable components that can be easily assembled, disassembled, and relocated across the site. Through these experiments, the design investigates how a temporary spatial structure might facilitate communal foraging practices while maintaining minimal ecological disturbance. Sliding panels, open frames, and adjustable surfaces are explored as ways of accommodating activities such as drying wild herbs, preparing foraged teas, and hosting small gatherings within the landscape.

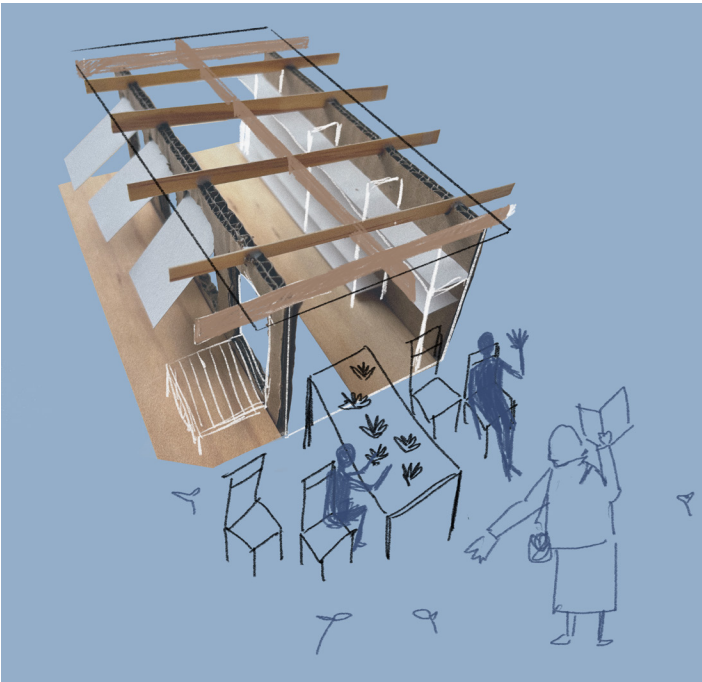


Figure 72. Jessica Zhang,
Early model iterations of hut,
Digital Composite, 2025

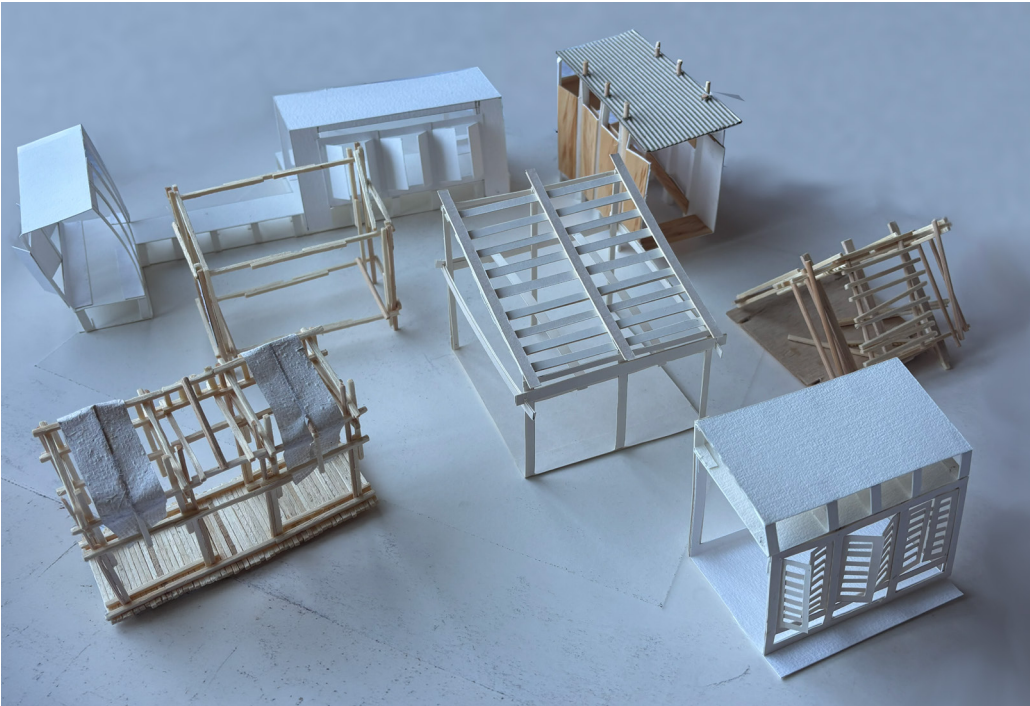


Figure 73. Jessica Zhang,
Surviving models from design iteration,
Photograph, 2026

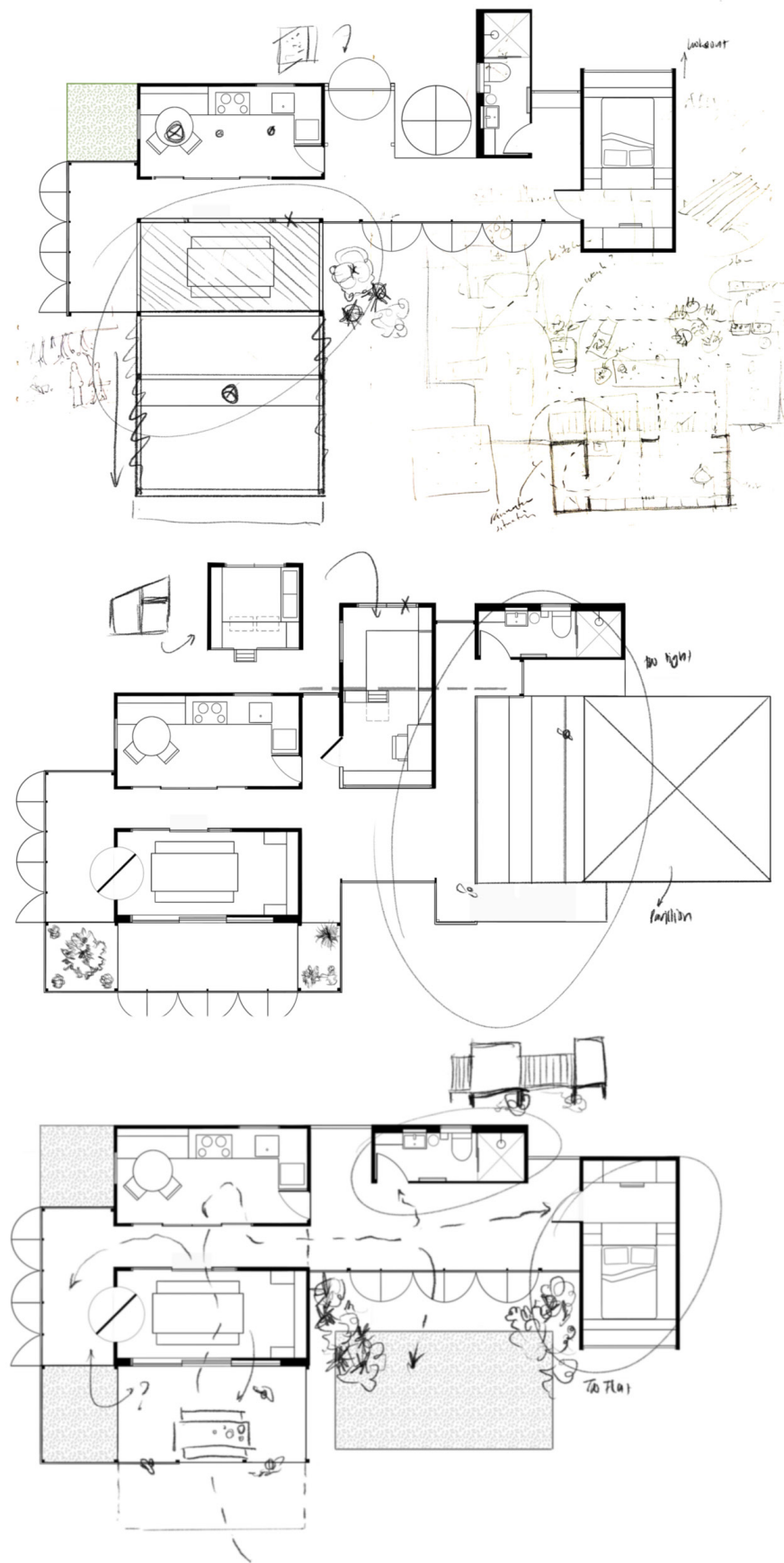


Figure 74. Jessica Zhang,
Early Floorplan Iterations,
floorplan sketches, 2025

Figure 75. Jessica Zhang,
Front and back parallel view Forager's Hut,
3D Model Capture, 2026

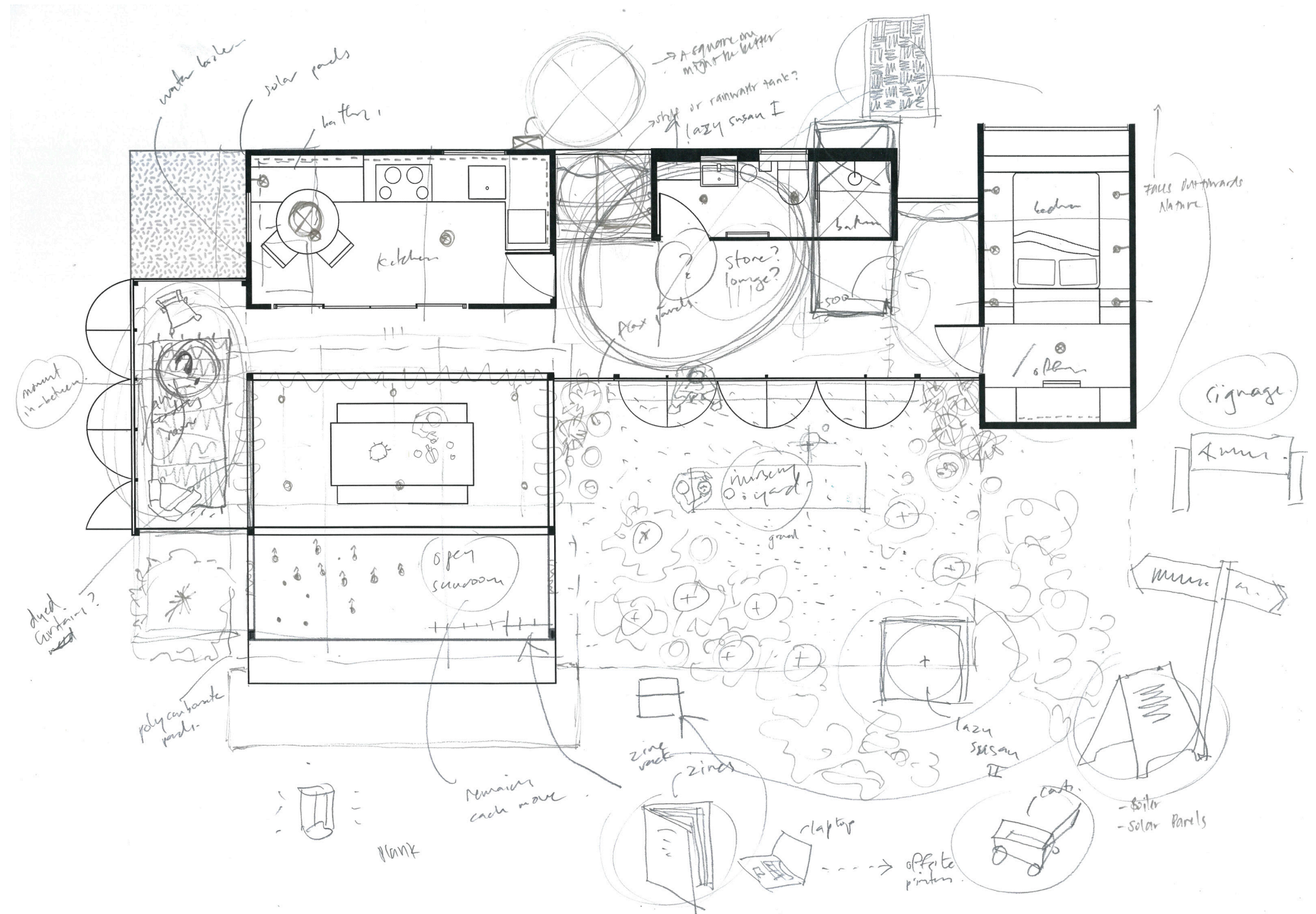


Figure 76. Jessica Zhang, Latest Floorplan Iteration, floorplan sketch, 2026

Architectural drawings helped clarify the spatial organisation of the hut. Plans and sections were drawn to explore how different narrative functions – such as cooking, sleeping, gathering and foraging activities – could unfold within the structure. These drawings also investigated how transitional spaces such as verandas could mediate movement between the inside and the outside. The drawings were developed through iterative drafting, using tracing overlays to test and refine spatial arrangements while allowing the spatial framework to evolve rather than fixing the design into a final form.

The hut is organised as a series of small movable structures, separating domestic functions such as the kitchen, sleeping space, living area, and bathroom into individual tiny houses. These elements are connected through verandas that act as transitional thresholds, allowing circulation between spaces while mediating the relationship between interior and exterior environments. Rather than functioning simply as corridors, the verandas operate as in-between spaces where activities such as gathering, lounging, tea preparation, and informal conversation can occur.

Through this iterative process of sketching, modelling, and drawing, the Forager's Hut gradually developed into an evolving spatial framework. The final design translates this evolving framework into a collection of interconnected spaces that support different modes of inhabitation, from individual domestic activities to communal gathering and engagement with the landscape. The final renders demonstrate how the architectural language developed through the iterative process is expressed spatially, with timber framing, screened openings, verandas, and layered thresholds creating varying degrees of enclosure and exposure. Rather than presenting a singular enclosed dwelling, the hut operates as an assemblage of spaces that can accommodate cooking, resting, making, learning, and gathering. The communal demonstration space extends these activities beyond the domestic scale, providing a setting for sharing knowledge and practices of foraging, while the kitchen, bathroom, and corridor demonstrate how everyday routines remain closely connected to the surrounding landscape.

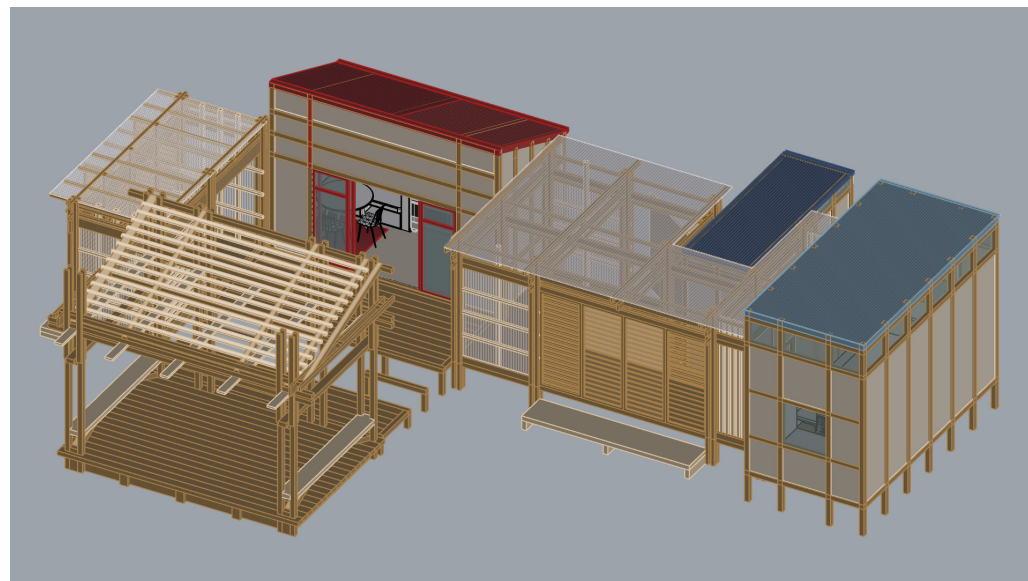


Figure 77. Jessica Zhang, Colour blocked Forager's Hut Model, digital model capture, 2026

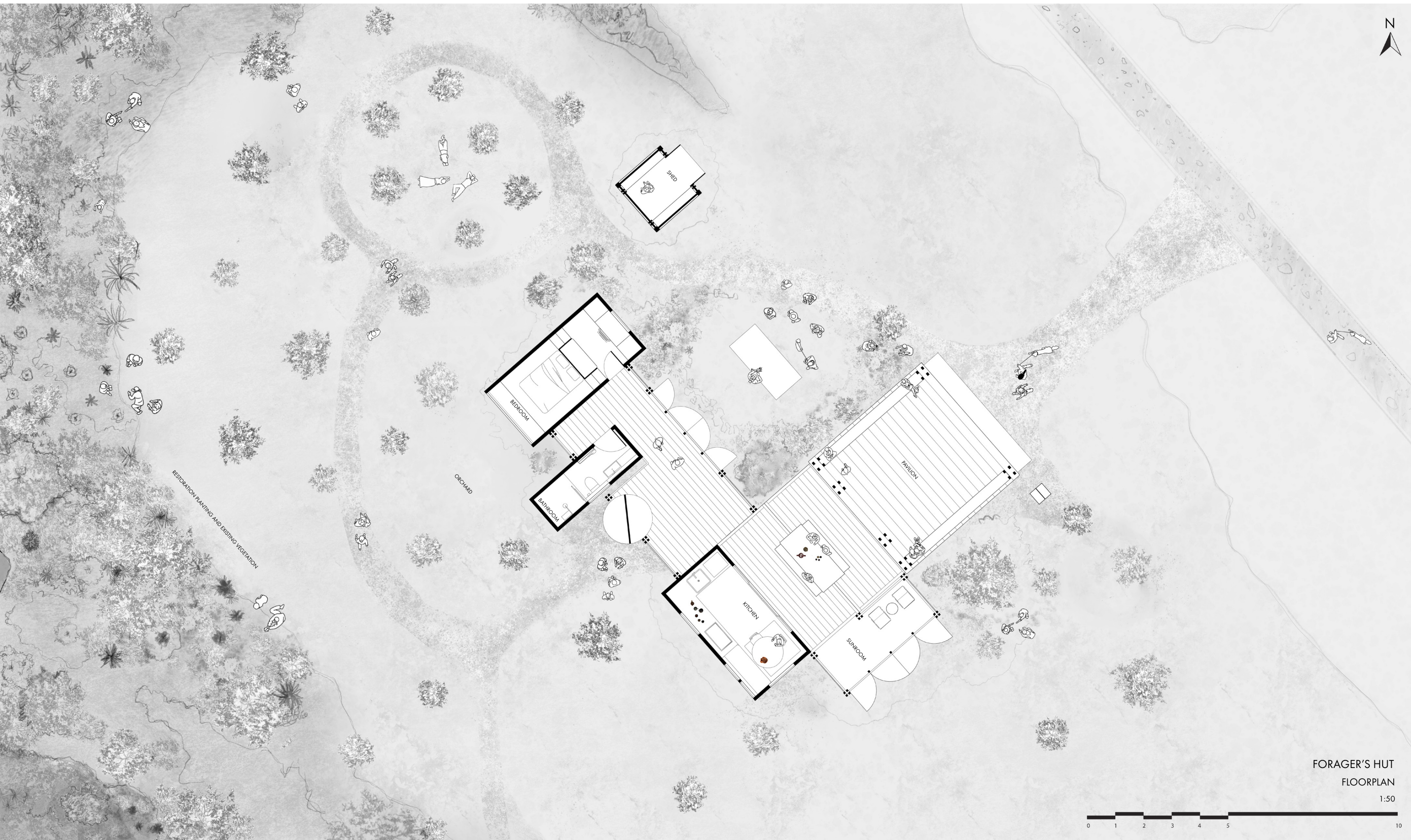


Figure 78. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Final Floorplan, 1:50 @ 1000x594mm, 2026



Figure 79. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Final Section, 1:50 @ 1118x594mm, 2026

FORAGER'S HUT
SECTION
1:50
0 1 2 3 4 5 10



Figure 80. Jessica Zhang, *Forager's Hut Hero Visual*,
 photoshopped render, 2026



Figure 81. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Communal Demonstration Visual, final render, 2026



Figure 82. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Pavilion, final render, 2026

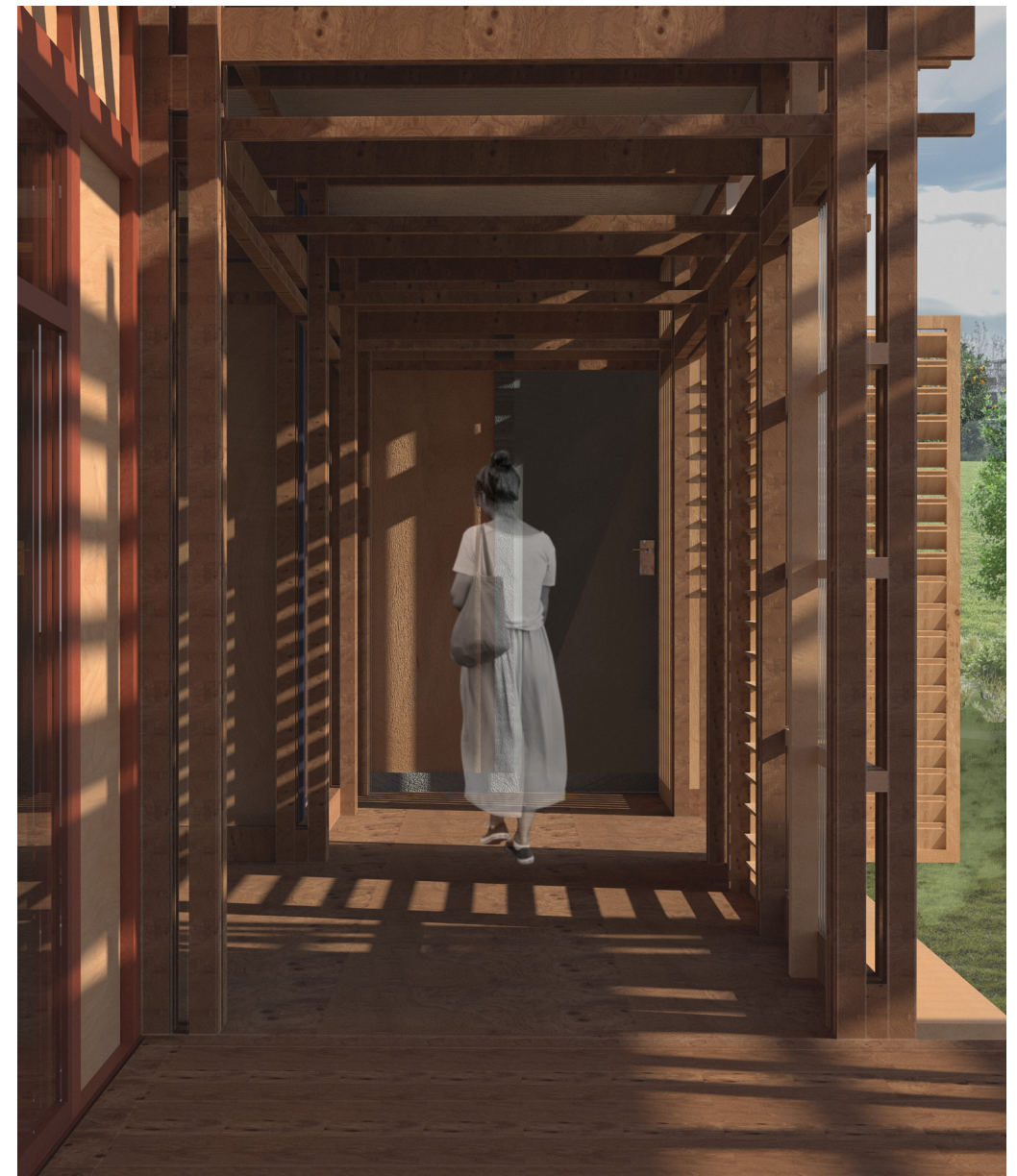


Figure 83. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Corridor, final render, 2026



Figure 84. Jessica Zhang,
Forager's Hut Kitchen Visual,
final render,
2026

Figure 85. Jessica Zhang,
Bathroom Visual,
photoshopped render,
2026



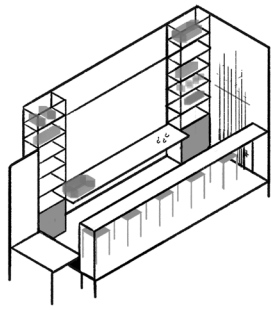
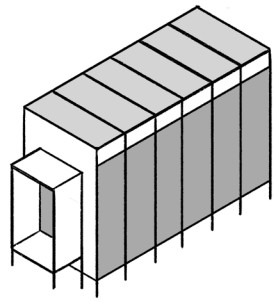


Figure 86. Jessica Zhang, Forager's Hut Final 1:50 Model,
photograph, 2026

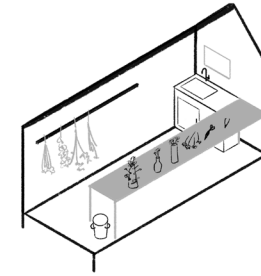
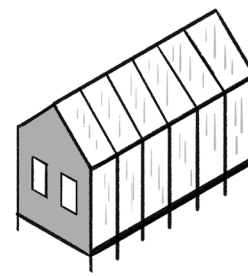
The visualisations also illustrate how movement through the hut becomes part of the foraging experience. Views shift between enclosed rooms, semi-open verandas, framed views, and the surrounding landscape, allowing the boundary between dwelling and environment to remain permeable. In this sense, the final proposal does not seek to resolve the tensions identified through the earlier iterations by creating a more complete or self-contained dwelling; instead, it embraces them through an architecture of openness, adaptability, and connection. The modular logic of the Forager's Hut also opened the possibility for the system to expand beyond the final domestic arrangement. A series of conceptual huts was developed to visualise how individual components could be adapted to support different foraging practices and communal activities.

These speculative structures explore possibilities such as seed libraries, fishing, flower arranging, mushroom cultivation, plant preservation, and other forms of making and gathering. Rather than proposing these as additional fixed programmes, the conceptual huts demonstrate the potential of the hut's structural language to accommodate changing uses, users, and relationships with the landscape. The collection therefore extends the Forager's Hut from a singular dwelling into a broader, adaptable system of small-scale structures that could respond to different seasonal practices and site conditions.

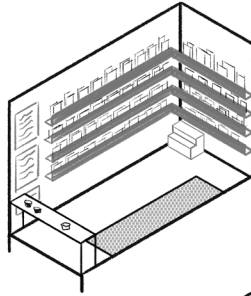
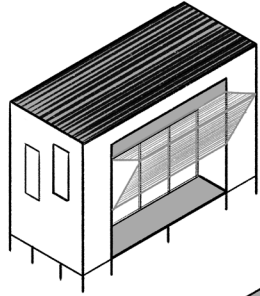
The Forager's Hut therefore becomes less fixed architecture and more a spatial framework for living alongside the landscape, where domestic and communal activities can extend into the spaces between architecture and land.



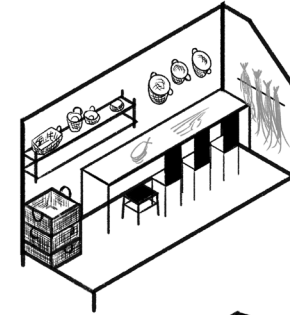
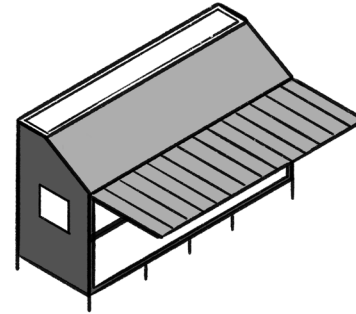
Fishing Hut



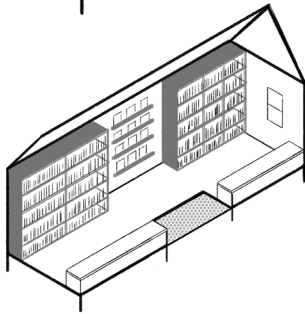
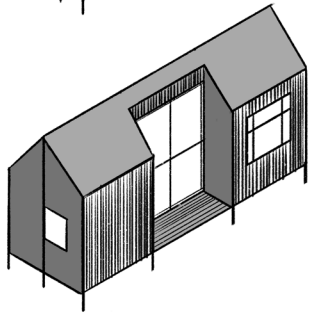
Flower Arrangement Hut



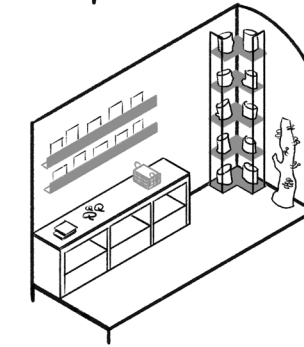
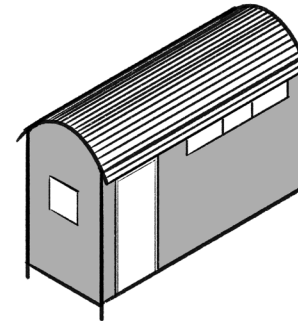
Seed Library



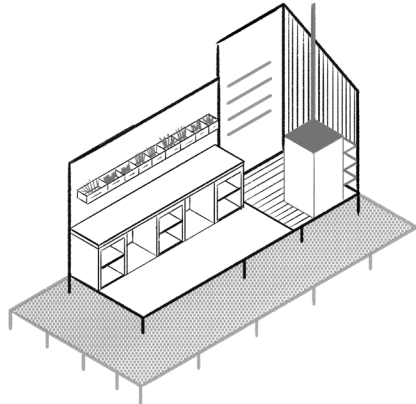
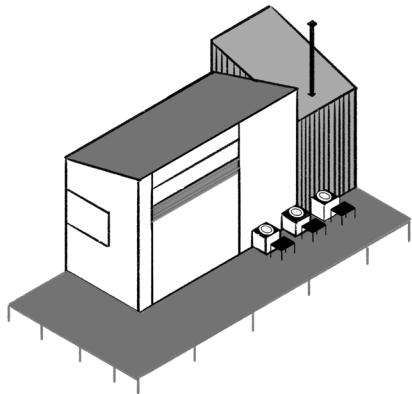
Weaving Hut



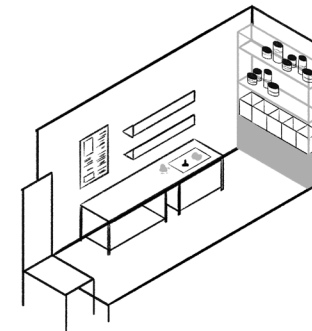
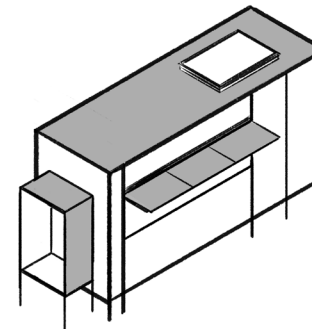
Forager's Library



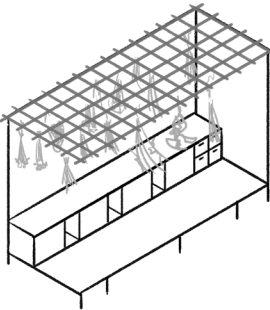
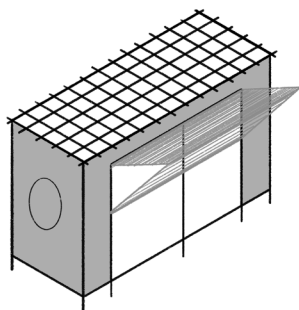
Mushroom Hut



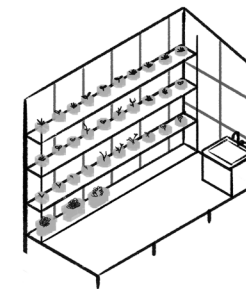
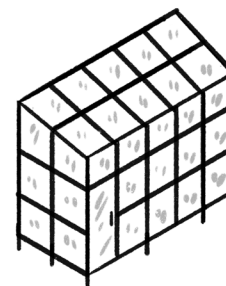
Ceramics Hut



Pigment Hut



Plant Preservation Hut



Plant Nursery

Future Scope: Conceptual Huts

Figure 87. Jessica Zhang, Future Scope Conceptual Huts, isometric sketches, 2026

EXHIBITION DESIGN

As the various aspects of my practice unfolded – narrative writing, ceramic production, modelling, planning – an exhibition format began to emerge that could communicate the project’s spatial narrative. Rather than presenting a single architectural proposal, the exhibition brings together a collection of artefacts, drawings, and models produced throughout the research process, allowing visitors to encounter the project as a series of interconnected spatial and material investigations.

The exhibition plan includes a loose assemblage of elements developed during the research process: Ceramic vessels produced from foraged clay gathered from Barry Curtis Park; maps and photographs recording encounters with the landscape; speculative maps of the future travels of the Forager’s Hut; a narrative scroll presenting poetic imaginings of foraging routines; physical scaled models of the Forager’s hut exploring its spatial configuration; and detail models of its individual architectural components.

Together, these elements form an installation that represents the evolving dialogue between site, material, and spatial design explored throughout the research.

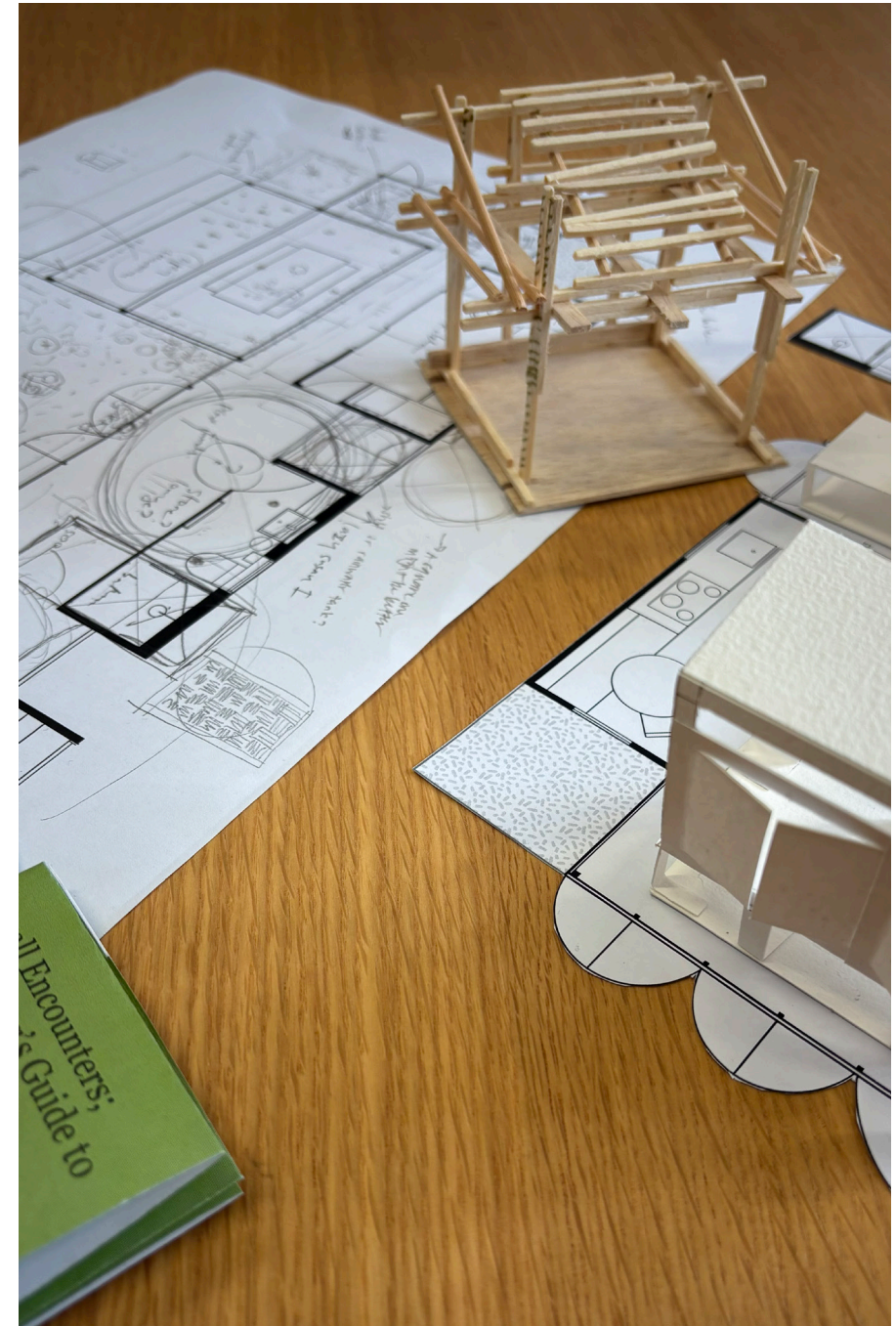
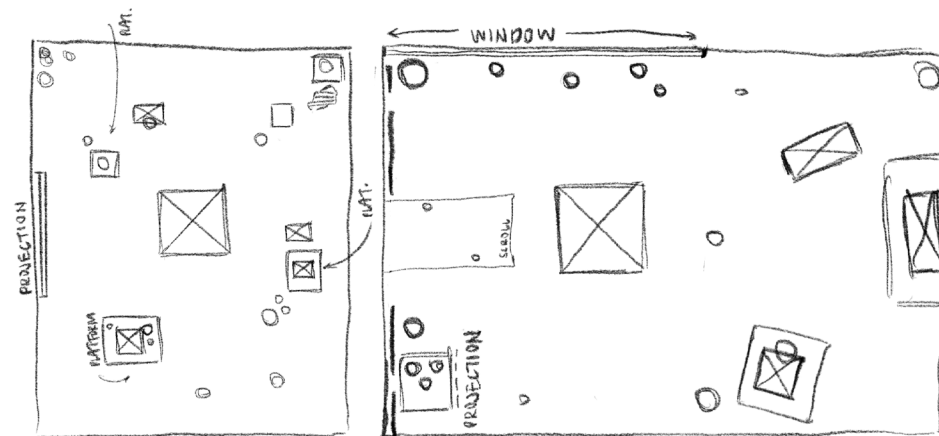


Figure 88. Jessica Zhang, Exhibition planning, photograph, 2026



Figure 89. Jessica Zhang,
Interpretive exhibition perspective,
digital drawing, 2026

Figure 90. Jessica Zhang,
Early Exhibition planning,
digital sketch, 2026



The exhibition layout is being developed to reflect the embodied act of foraging itself.

Ceramic artefacts are proposed to be scattered across the floor, encouraging visitors to physically ground themselves within the space. As they move through the installation, visitors would navigate between objects in a manner like foraging – observing closely, bending down, weaving between elements, and gradually discovering relationships between artefacts, drawings, and models.

This spatial arrangement creates a sequence of encounters that mirrors the rhythms of foraging, where knowledge emerges through attentiveness, movement, and interaction with landscape.

Visitors may be invited to move through the installation by shifting their attention between ground-level artefacts, wall-mounted drawings, and elevated models. Some objects encourage close inspection or touch, while others can be understood from a distance. In this way, the exhibition presents the research not as a singular architectural solution but as an assemblage of relationships between body, material, and land.

Section V. Concluding Reflections

The Forager's Hut is not emerging through a conventional architectural design process aimed at producing a finalised project. Instead, it developed gradually through a series of embodied encounters with landscape, a concern for the era in which we live in now, natural materialities, and everyday practices within the Anthropocentric conditions in which we live.

In this sense, the project reaffirms the central premise introduced at the beginning of this research: that meaningful relationships with landscape cannot be designed through abstraction alone but must emerge through embodied engagement with place. My experiences of foraging revealed how attentiveness to seasonality, ecological rhythms, and material processes can shape spatial understanding. Rather than treating the "outside" as a passive setting for architectural intervention, the research has positioned the vastness of the outside as an active participant within the design process.

This process also illuminated the conditions described earlier of the inside, as a crisis of interiority. Through the routines of foraging, making, and gathering, the project explored how spatial design might reintroduce moments of pause and intentional friction within everyday life, supporting slower rhythms of activity such as observing, preparing food, sharing tea, and resting.

In this research, thresholds are reimagined as spaces of exchange between the intimacy of the "inside" and the vastness of the "outside". The embodied foraging framework operates as a guiding model for these transitional conditions, suggesting how everyday practices might remain in dialogue with surrounding environments. For example, domestic or urban spaces could incorporate adaptable threshold conditions – such as operable boundaries, semi-exterior rooms, or permeable surfaces – that encourage occupants to remain attentive to ecological rhythms and material cycles. In this way, the embodied foraging framework extends beyond metaphor, proposing a model for how spatial design can support continuous dialogue between habitation and landscape over time.

Material experimentation further reinforced this relationship. Gathering clay from my childhood park carried a particular resonance, bringing the tangible traces of its geological and intangible histories into practice. Through ceramic experimentation, these materials were transformed into functional pedagogical artefacts used within the Forager's Hut. The resulting objects become more than functional tools; they serve as records of encounter between body, land, and time. In this way, the material practice demonstrated how making can operate as a form of listening to more-than-human worlds rather than imposing form upon them.

Across the mapping, making, writing, and modelling undertaken throughout this research, a recurring theme emerged: design did not begin with a fixed idea of architecture, but with attentiveness to what was already present within the landscape, existing. The hut borrows space from the land temporarily, while leaving behind traces of engagement – such as native plants replanted over the course of the encampment's presence and a pavilion that remains available for the community to gather and continue interacting with the surrounding environment. In this sense, the intervention functions less as a permanent architectural claim and more as a catalyst for spatial dialogues between people, place, and ecological processes.

The research also acknowledges that the Forager's Hut remains an open proposition rather than a prescribed model for engagement with landscape. Its relocation across different sites, materials, and communities would inevitably produce different spatial and material relationships, suggesting that the hut should enable rather than determine how foraging is experienced. This opens possibilities for future iterations to respond more directly to the specific ecological and cultural conditions of each place.

Ultimately, *Foraging Space* suggests that reconnecting with nature is not achieved through monumental architectural gestures in spatial design, but through small acts of dwelling within landscape – walking, gathering, making, and pausing long enough to notice the environments that surround us. Through these practices, spatial design becomes less about constructing objects and more about cultivating relationships between people, place, and the more-than human world.

Foraging Space
The Exhibition

The final exhibition stages Foraging Space as an environment to be moved through rather than a collection of architectural outcomes viewed from a distance. Architectural drawings, renders, animation, physical models, ceramic artefacts, a narrative scroll, and small foraged clay trinkets come together as fragments of the forager’s world. Their arrangement extends the project’s embodied methodology into the gallery, inviting visitors to engage through movement, observation, touch, and discovery.

The Forager’s Hut is presented through models, drawings, renders, and animation, revealing its adaptability and potential to respond to movement, seasonality, and place. Alongside these, ceramic artefacts made from foraged clay gathered from Barry Curtis Park retain traces of the landscape through their mineral inclusions and imperfections. Their small scale invites visitors to look closely and hold them, bringing the material encounter of foraging into the exhibition.

The narrative scroll follows the imagined journeys and encounters of the forager, moving between observation and imagination. Developed from my own experiences of foraging, the writing became a way of dreaming of an alternative way of living shaped by attentiveness, reciprocity, and familiarity with the landscape. Visitors are encouraged to move through the exhibition with similar curiosity: bending down to examine models, tracing the scroll, lifting components, and handling the ceramic artefacts. Small clay trinkets can also be taken away, extending the encounter beyond the gallery and transforming the project from something observed into something gathered and carried.

Through its staging, the exhibition became an extension of the research rather than simply its conclusion. The work shifts from something to be viewed towards something to be encountered, allowing the relationships between body, material, architecture, and land explored throughout Foraging Space to be experienced by the audience.

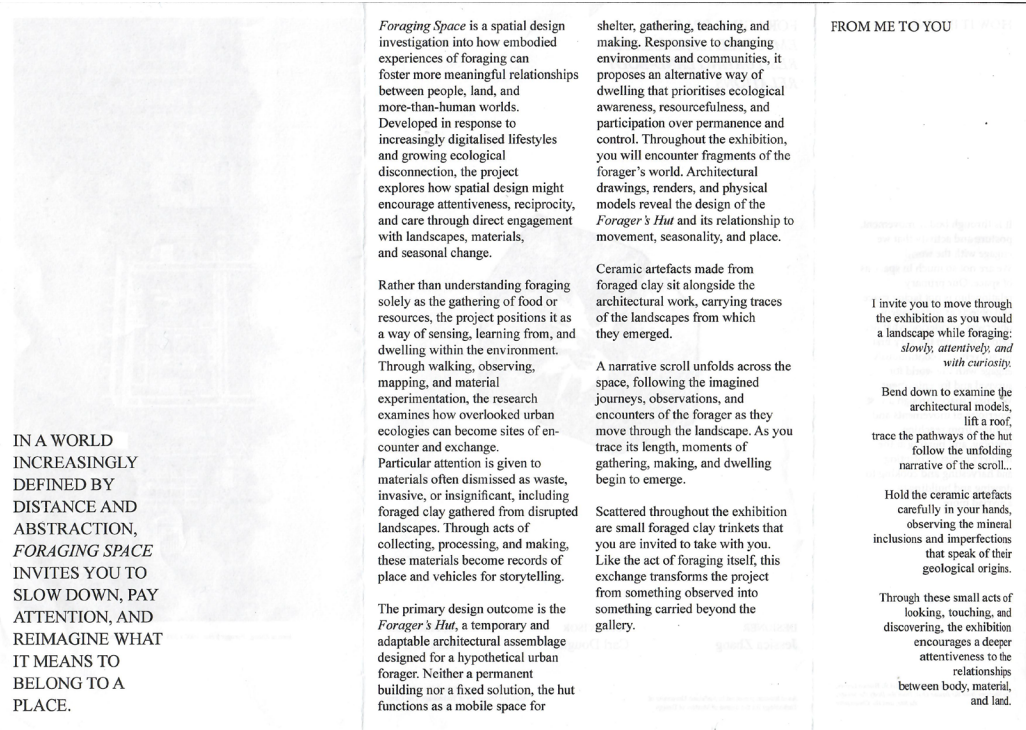
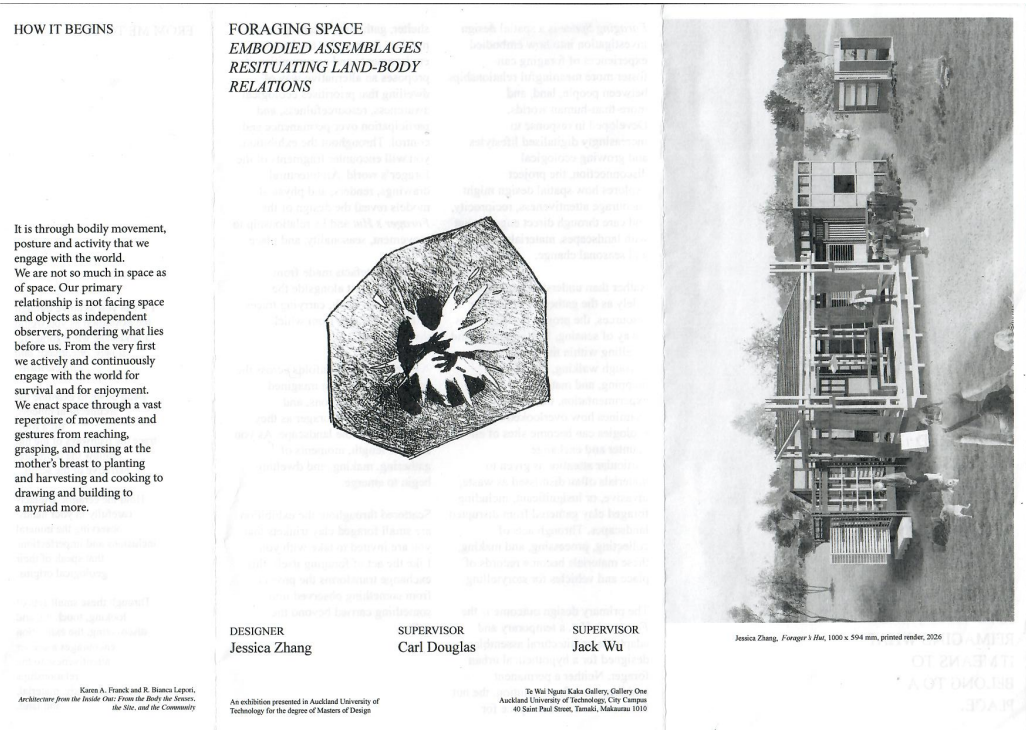


Figure 91. Jessica Zhang, Exhibition Brochure, scan, 2026



Figure 92. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

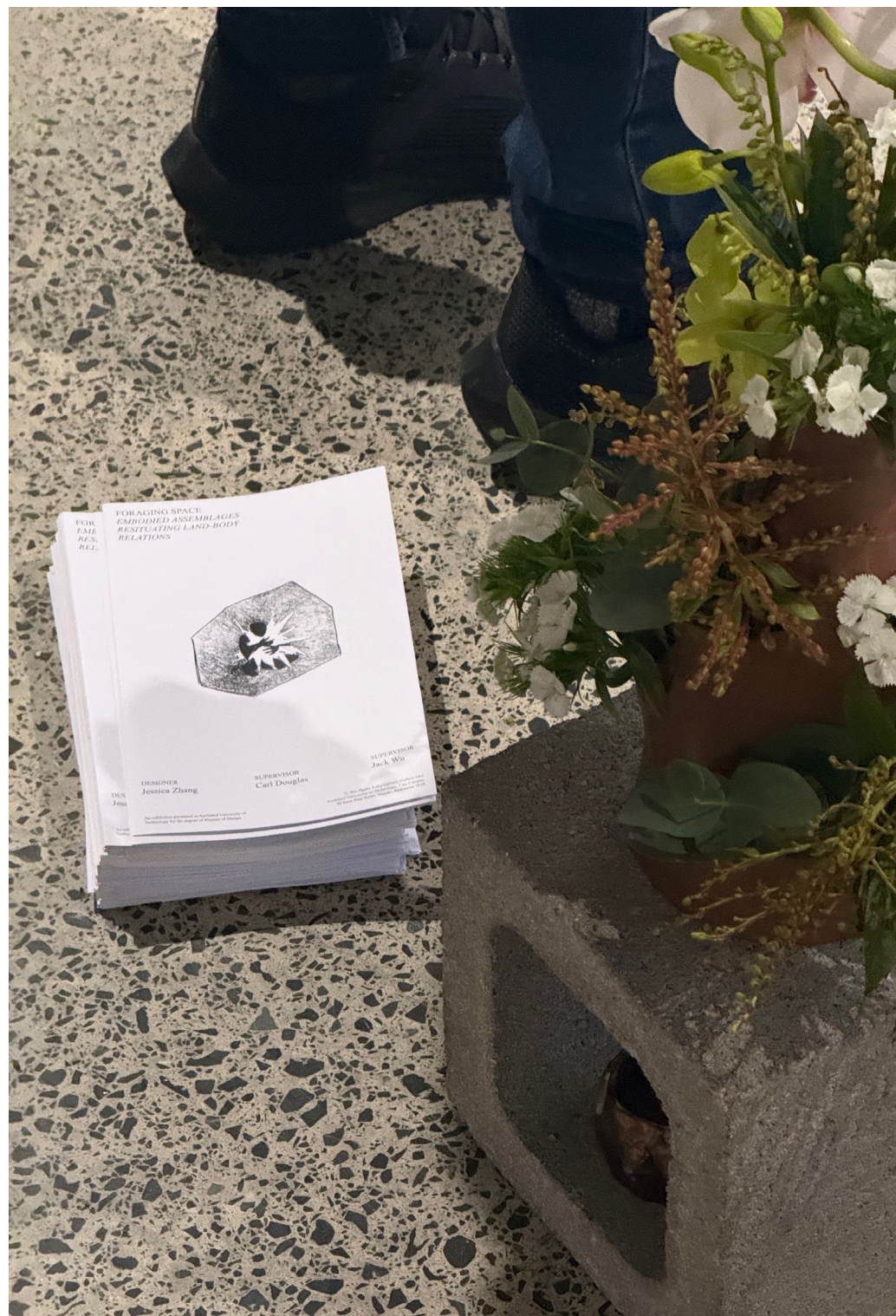


Figure 93. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 94. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 95. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 96. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 97. Paul Chapman, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

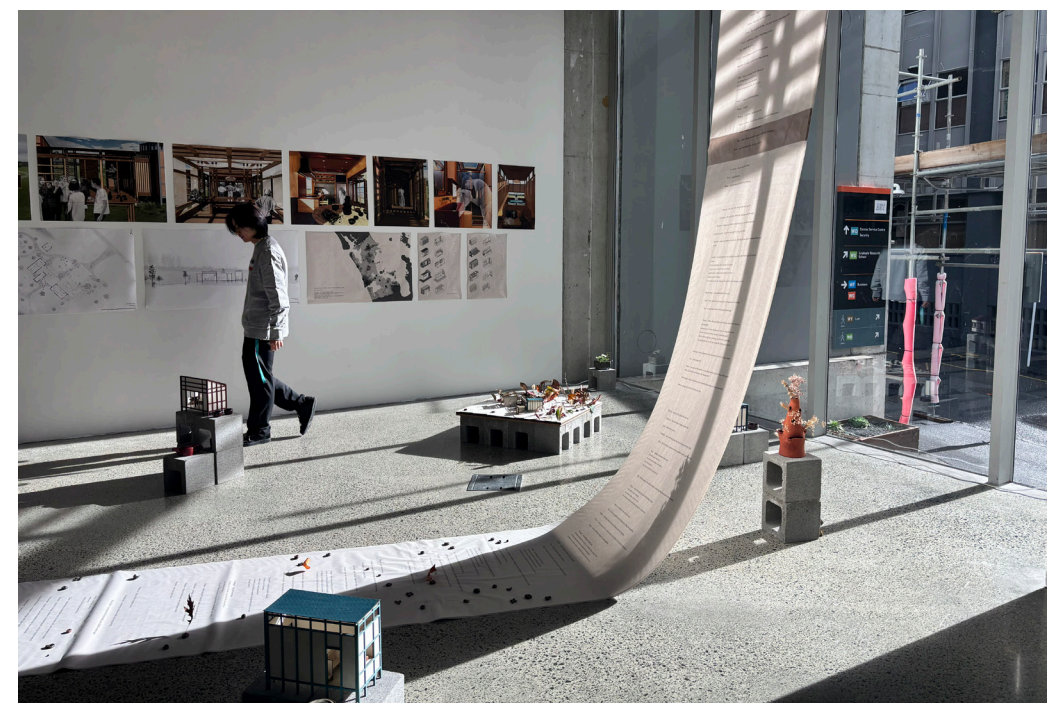


Figure 98. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

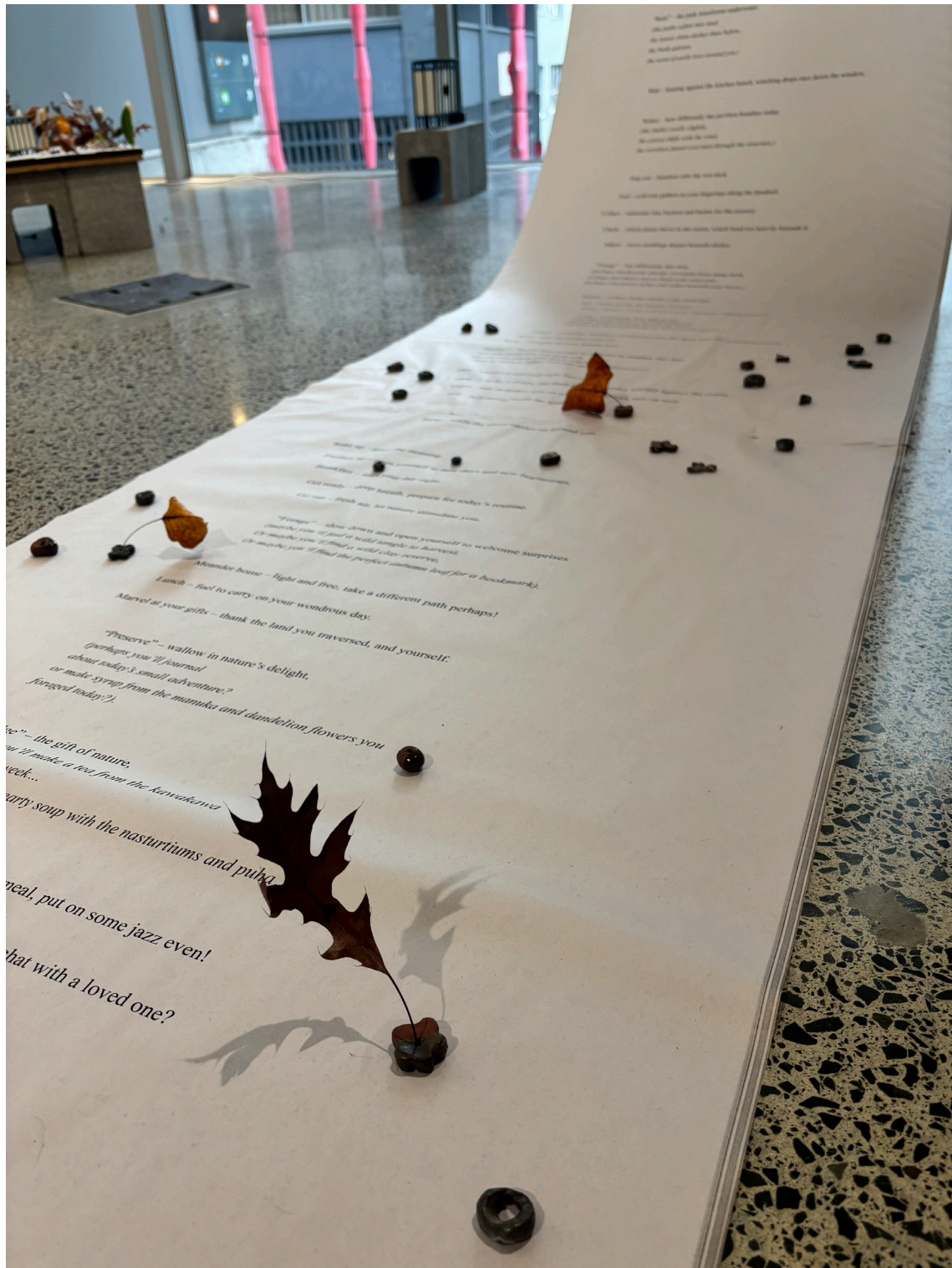


Figure 99. Jessica Zhang, *Foraging Space*, exhibition photograph, 2026

Figure 100.
Jessica Zhang,
Foraging Space,
exhibition photograph,
2026



Figure 101.
Jessica Zhang,
Foraging Space,
exhibition photograph,
2026



Figure 102. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 103. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026



Figure 104. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

Figure 105.
Jessica Zhang,
Foraging Space,
exhibition photograph,
2026



Figure 106.
Jessica Zhang,
Foraging Space,
exhibition photograph,
2026

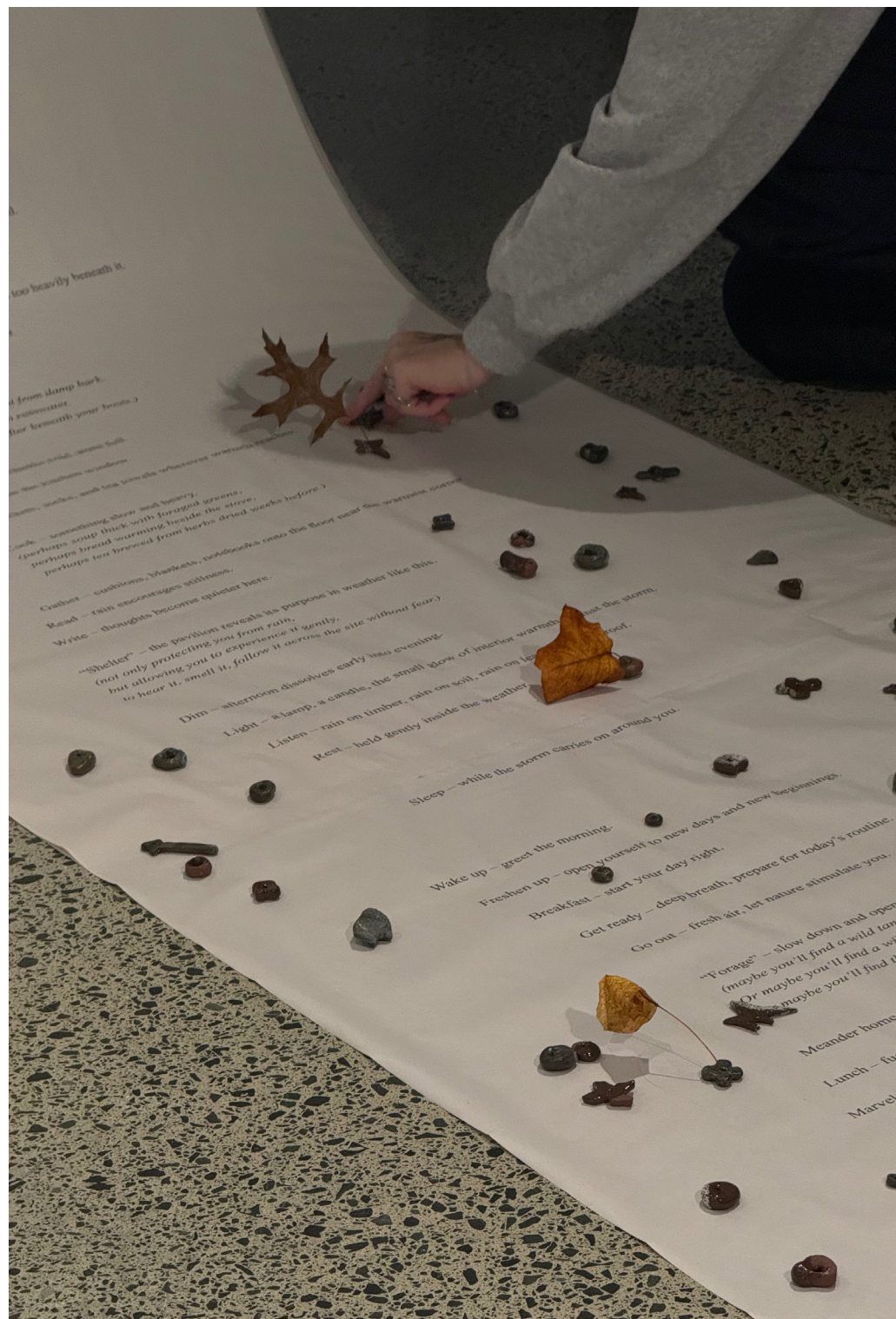


Figure 107. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

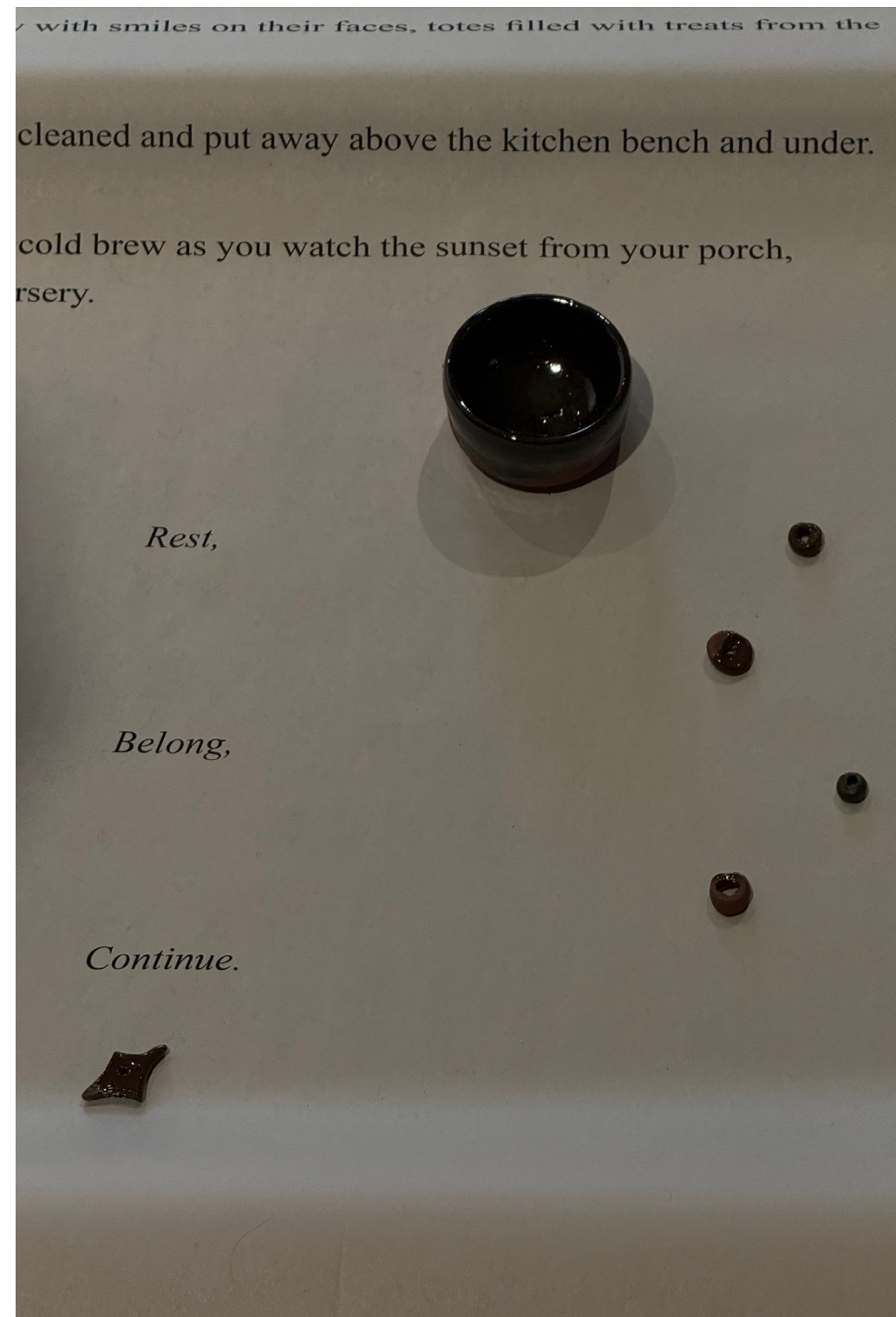


Figure 108. Jack Wu, *Foraging Space*, participatory exhibition photograph, 2026

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