

Two Projects

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Kiss and Tell

The public telephone has seen the many vicissitudes of life in the late twentieth century. Its unrivalled distribution in almost every city of the world makes it the ideal forum for disseminating services and information. Changes in the way we communicate, however—WAP technology, conference calling, webcams, and other computer-related outgrowths, have led to the decline of the traditional booth as a means of conveying information. The need for new functions and programs for the booth has become ever more pressing with increasing space demands and changing patterns of life. The following list compiles important dates in the history of telephony:

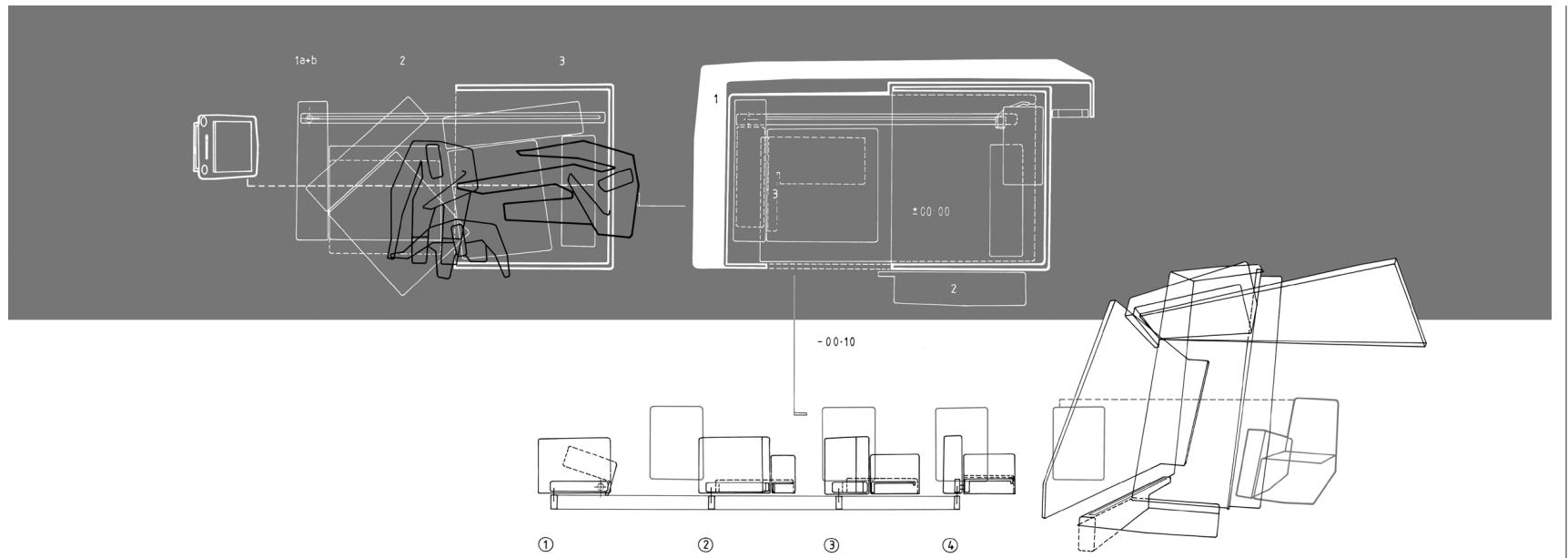
1700: Defined as any device conveying sound over a distance, the first telephone consists of two vessels in separate rooms connected by a piece of string, much like the toy children construct in the late twentieth Century.

1729: English chemist, Stephen Gray transmits electricity over almost 300 feet of brass wire and moistened thread.

1837: Samuel Morse invents the first workable telegraph. Telegraphy replaces the Pony Express, clipper ships and other slow-paced means of communicating.

1861: Johann Reis completes the first non-working telephone. Made of a sausage skin, a knitting needle, cork,





and a piece of platinum, it was able to transmit music, but not intelligible speech.

1876: Elisha Gray and Alexander Graham Bell invent the first working telephone, patent number 174 465. American President Rutherford Hayes is quoted as saying: "This telephone is an amazing invention, but who would ever want to use one of them?"

1885: The American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) is born, the most influential and one-time richest company in American corporate history. The telephone is credited as having made the skyscraper possible, creating a new type of city redolent of the fairy-tale constructs of mythical nations.

1889: The first public coin telephone appears in Hartford, Connecticut. Payment was given to a nearby attendant.

1950: AT&T establishes a telephone network allowing manual exchanges to be placed through a discrete operator.

1965: An electronic switching system

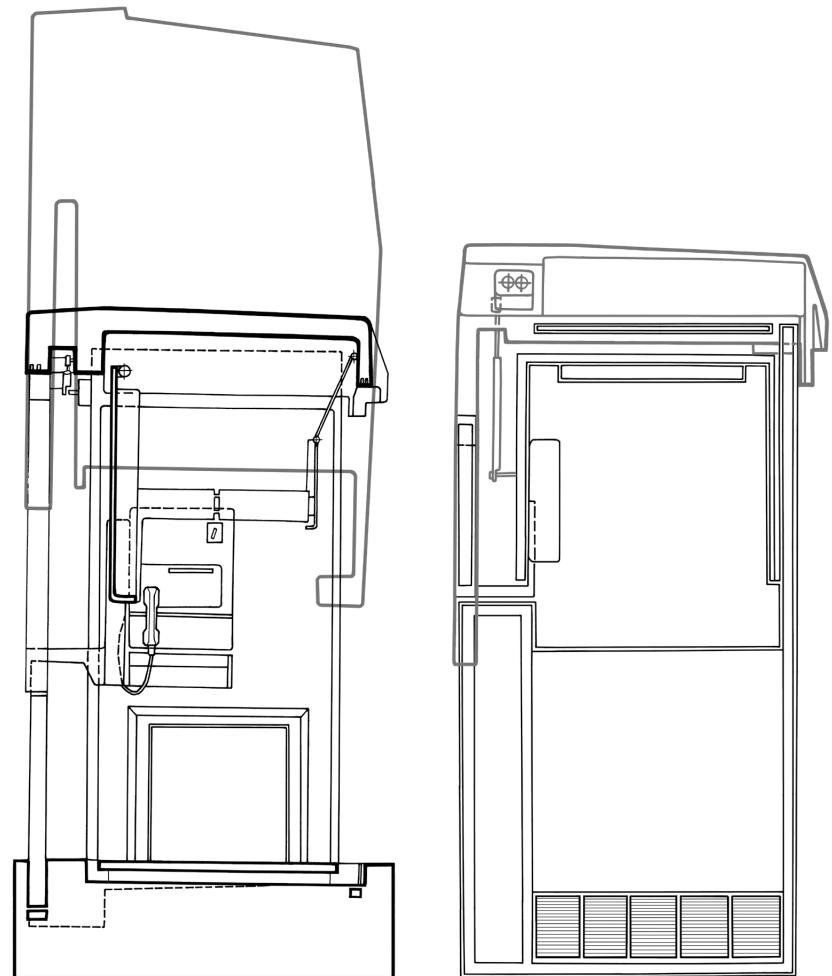
becomes the industry standard. London's red booths become a cultural icon.

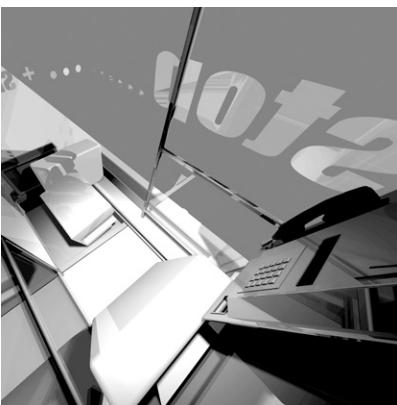
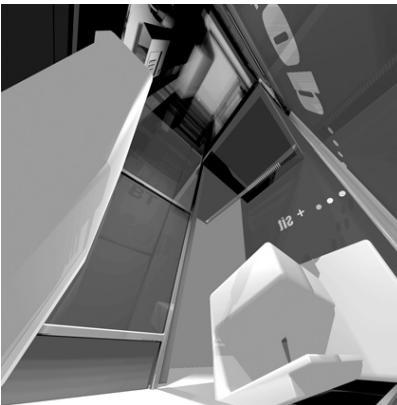
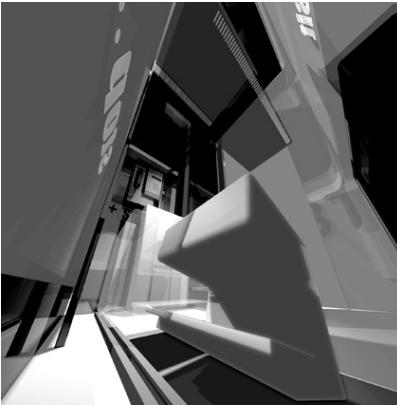
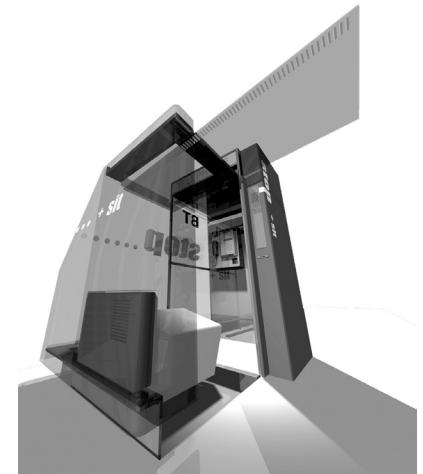
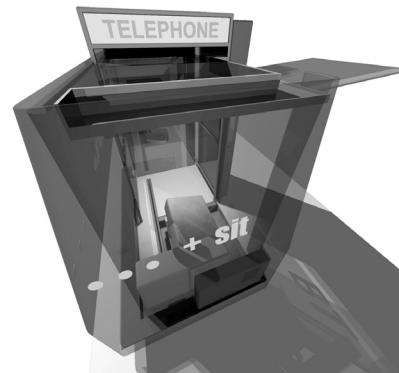
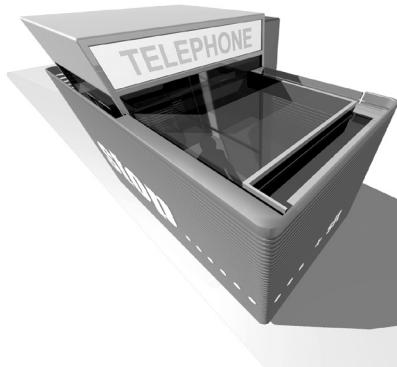
1990: London: telephone booths are claimed by the sex industry. Advertisements offering the full range of sexual services plaster the kiosk interiors. In other countries, less prurient notices adorn the cubicle walls.

2004: Telephone booths: the GlassStop™ assumes additional functions. A temporary living room is created within the city by wrapping a vari-focus glazed screen around the existing units. Fitted with an armchair and a television, it provides a place for people to rest between shopping, or before an evening rendez-vous, without having to purchase a coffee or beer. Making use of the phone power points, notably in London, the public telephone has been converted into a modern-day confession booth where people may divulge their personal failings to an audience several miles distant.

What consoles one nowadays is not repentance, but pleasure. Repentance is quite out of date.

—Oscar Wilde
Lady Windermere's Fan





1:1 We live in a culture where confession is not contrition but celebration. The fast-track to fame is not achievement but wallowing in the most outrageous and uncondonable acts imaginable. What other plausible explanation is there for the popularity of the Jerry Springer show and its endless stream of dysfunctionals queuing up to bare their souls on national television? Fellow contestants engage in a game of salacious one-upmanship while the studio and extended television audiences revel in mock holier-than-thou heckling.

For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

—Psalms 38:18

1:2 We live in a culture where our heroes—sportsmen and musicians, actors and politicians—are compelled to write autobiographical admissions of guilt and abuse—My life as an alcoholic, My fight against heroin, Why I shot Versace. Is this the penance for their fame? Ben Affleck, luminary of such films as *Reindeer Games* and *Forces of Nature*, ascribes his success and that of his fellow thespians to selling his soul to the Devil: “Those of us who have agreed to this Faustian bargain deserve our drubbings. We entered into the agreement willingly.” Can it be that each and every one of them has made a pact with Mephistopheles? Or does their belief that a price has been paid for their fame confer upon them the designation genius?

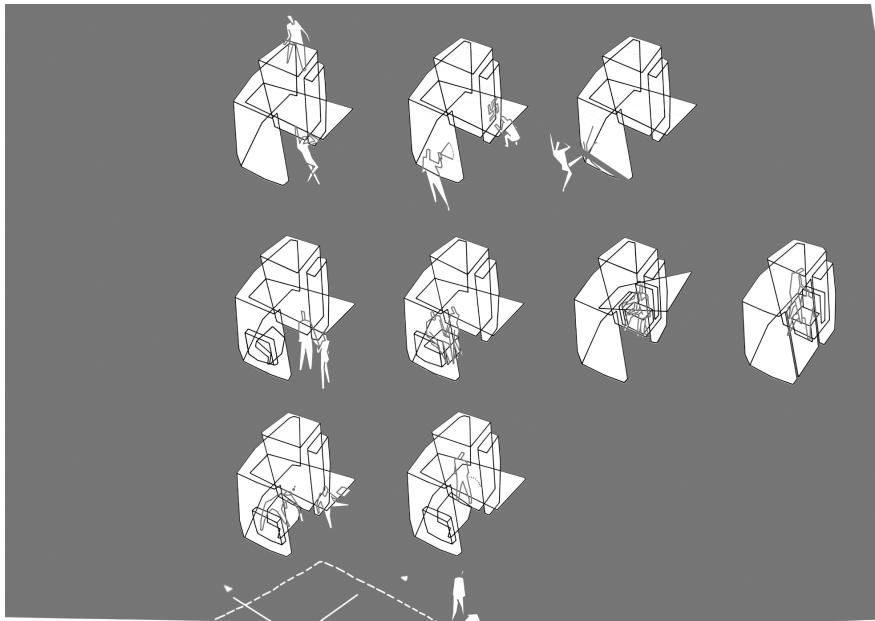
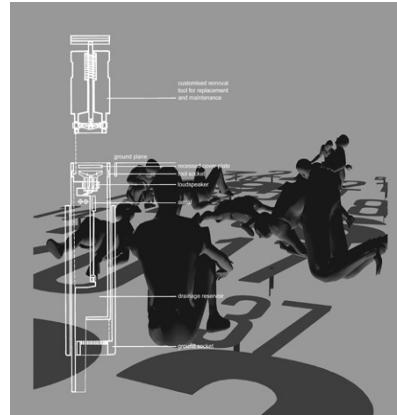
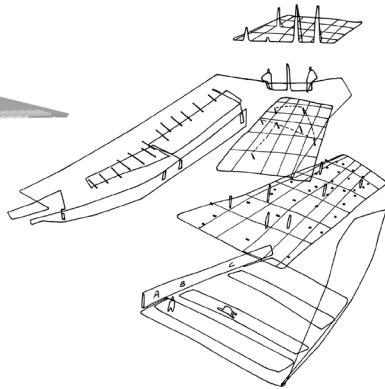
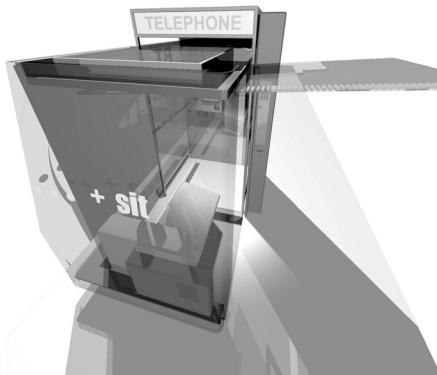
1:3 Before the Lutheran Reformation, the practice of selling indulgences was fairly commonplace. Parishioners would divest themselves of their life savings in return for the remission of temporal punishment in purgatory. Granted by the Papal authority, denominations of years, months, and days were dispensed through accredited agents. Far from being extinguished, this archaic chicanery is alive and well in the guise of modern-day therapy—in order to rid themselves of guilt, people spend billions of dollars a year on psychiatrists who nod sagely and repeat verbatim the last words spoken to them

1:4 Therapy is the new religion.

The defunct telephone kiosk has found a new lease of life in the form of the Confession Booth. Paradoxically, the dissolution of faith in our secular metropolis has not seen a corresponding disappearance in the need to confess. Guilt and absolution, it appears are not the sole preserve of Catholics. The success of the phone booth as a ground for confession rather than straightforward conversation can be put down to the physicalisation of the site. In an age of mobile communications and worldwide access, penitence is more than ever equated with physical hardship—the ritual of pilgrimage remains an integral part of redemption. The confession is broadcast live to the Listening Plain, a custom-built park where the intended confidante of the message, or general public may tune

in. At the end of the session, a disc of the confession is provided, giving the penitent a physical record of his or her transgressions. The recording may then be sent to a specific party, or kept in a personal collection as a permanent reminder of errancy.

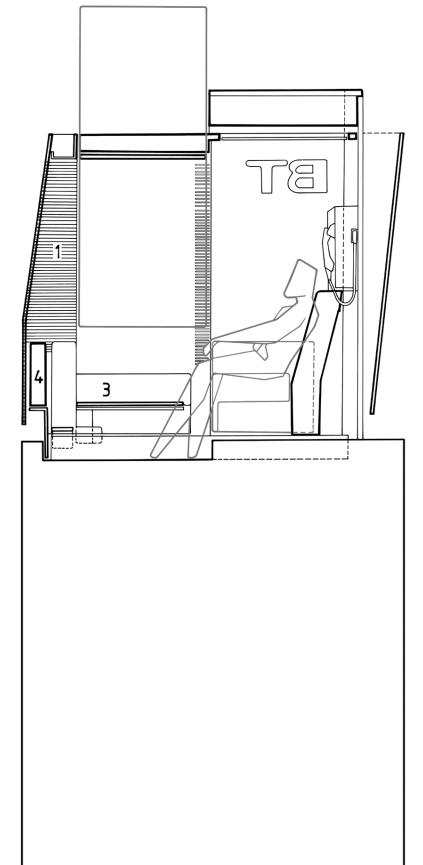
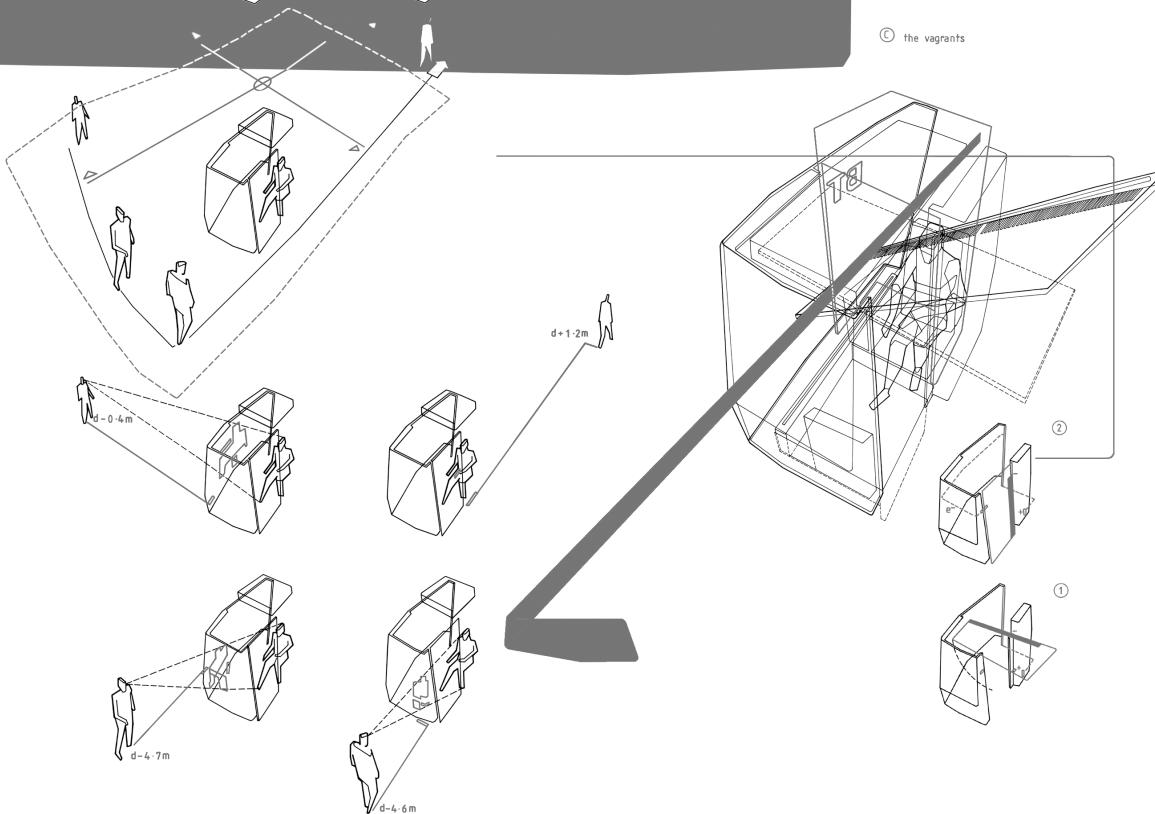
The Listening Plain proposes a radical reconditioning of public horizontal spaces with minimum visible intervention. Tiny infra-red receivers and loudspeakers are inserted into the existing floorplate to create a matrix of listening stations, broadcasting an aural membrane of whispered conversations, confessions and revelations. The true architecture, however, is not the soundscape, but the spaces created by the listeners—individuals ranging from the young to the old, the rich to the poor, the stick-like to the obese. Visitors to the plain twist into strange—positions crouching, kneeling, squatting, and reclining—in order to eavesdrop on occluded conversations transmitted from strategic locations within the city. In the process, they inadvertently form a living membrane that changes in texture according to the time of day and season. This layer of undulating material, ranging from bareskin to fur coats and scarves is clearly visible from afar and on high.



Ⓐ the vandals

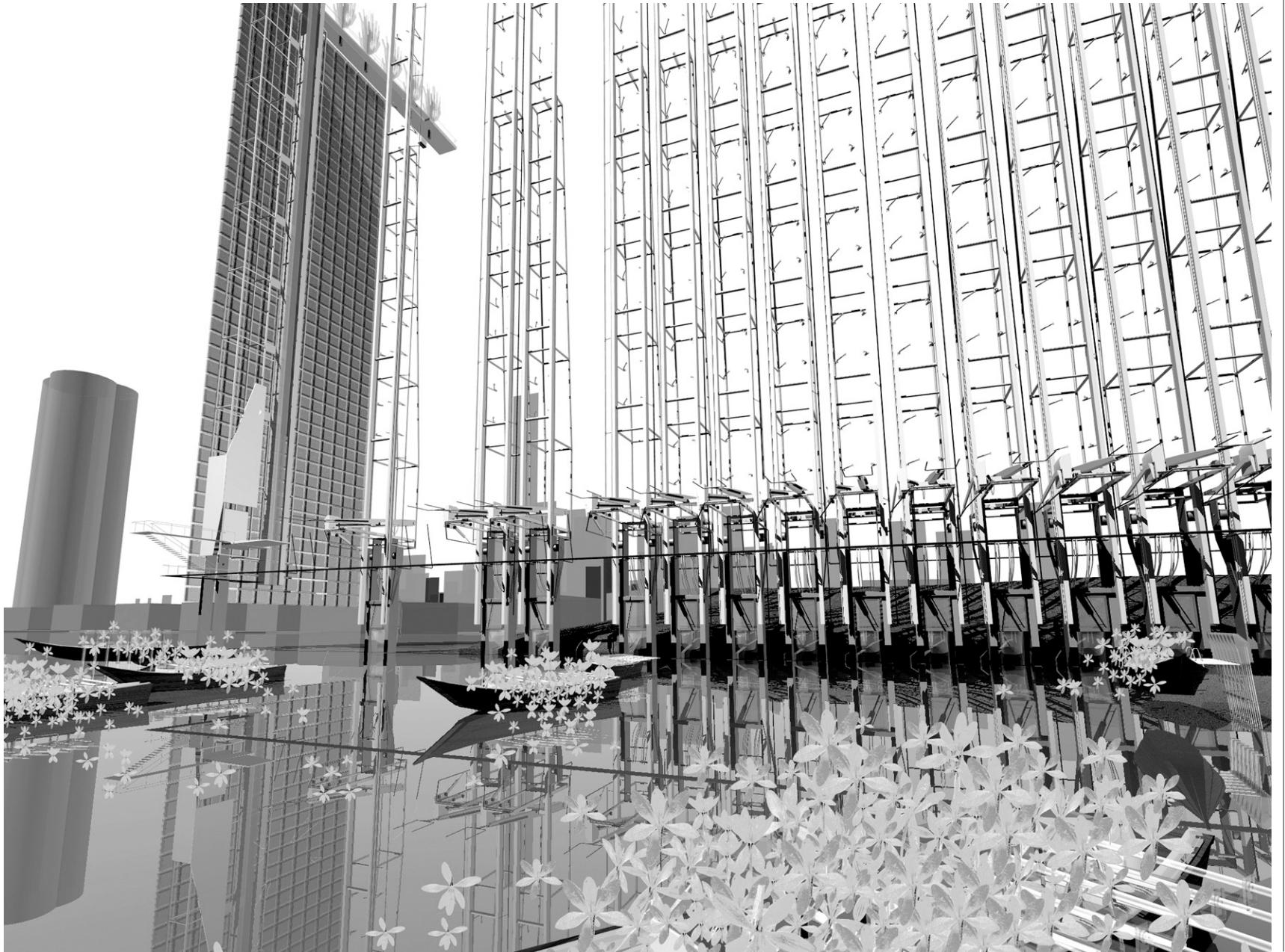
Ⓑ the lovers

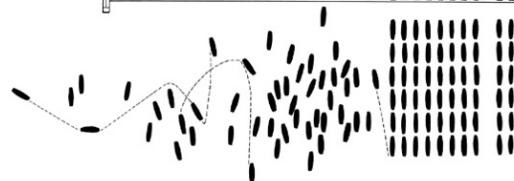
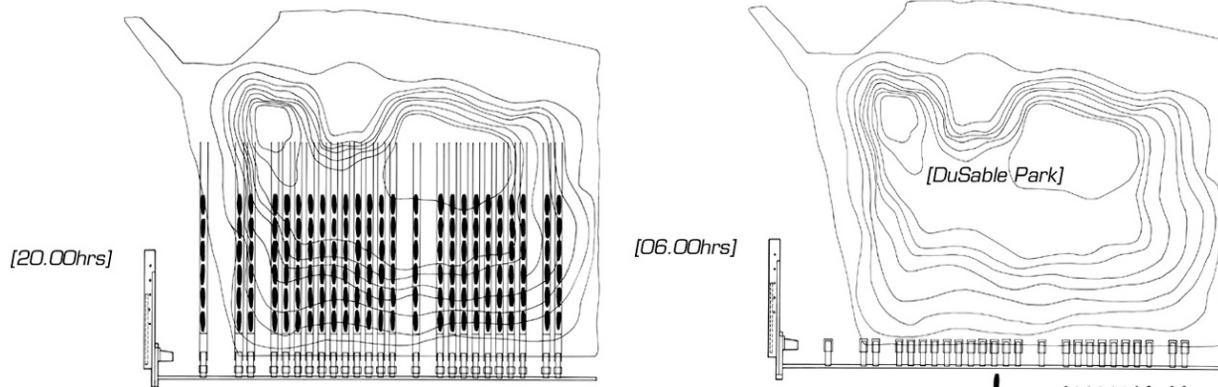
Ⓒ the vagrants



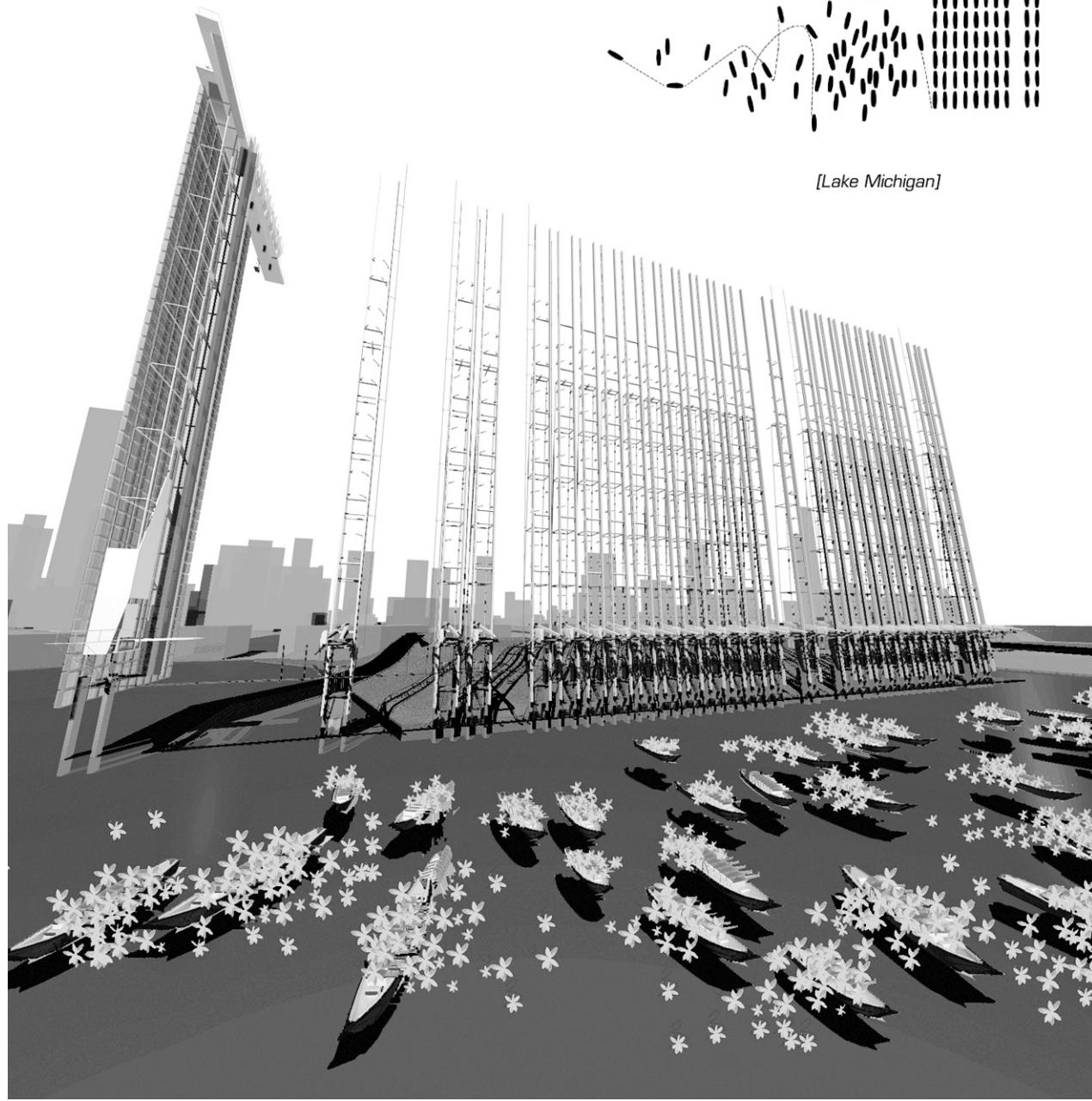
Key

1. Vari-focus screen. This creates a boundary of changeable privacy. As the door rotates shut, the electric circuit closes, completing the lines of liquid crystal running around the perimeter of the booth. The movements of the individual within are now obscured by bystanders and any passers-by.
2. Meter. Indicated on the exterior of the booth is the amount of time purchased. When the session ends, the door automatically opens out and the armchair disassembles to its default position.
3. Armchair in its default position, rotated and locked in place to prevent illicit occupation.
4. Plasma screen with optional infra-red headphones.





[Lake Michigan]

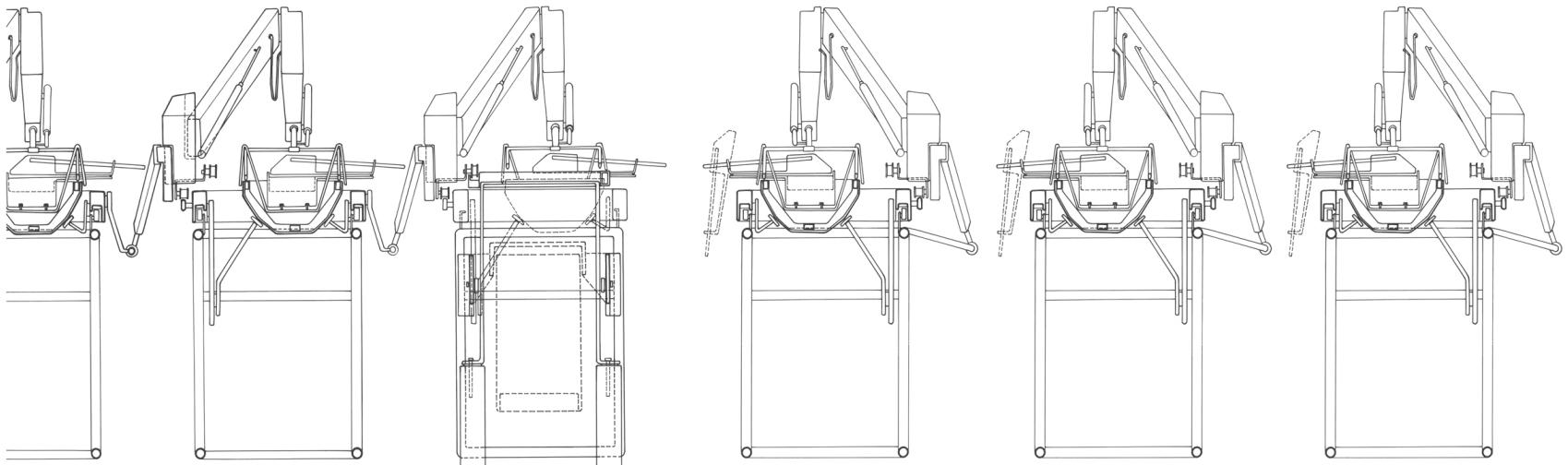


Park of Sand

This scheme is a piece of community landscape artwork, hovering on the edge of an overgrown meadow. It consists of rentable floating gardens, a skyscraper-plant-nursery and a draw-bridge linking into Chicato's Grant Park. The overall strategy deals with the topographic characteristics of the city: the water surface of Lake Michigan to the ground of DuSable Park, ascending up to the cacophony of high-rise skyscrapers. Delicately poised, the new elements avoid any physical interruption to the meadow: all flora, fauna, and romance of the site is preserved.

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century, water transportation was the means of dispersing people, ideas, and artifacts across oceans. Boats of the floating gardens symbolically celebrate the arrival of the first settler in Chicago: Haitian/French explorer, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable and other subsequent immigrants from various ethnic groups.

In response to the toxic ground condition, nature is hence elevated above the meadow. This rather surreal planting system serves as a reminder of world toxic contamination upon our fragile Earth, educating us on the importance of organic farming and healthier living. The floating gardens are primarily rentable boats with planting trays, equipped with frost-protection clear covers and artificial lighting tubes. Curated by the community, the floating gardens

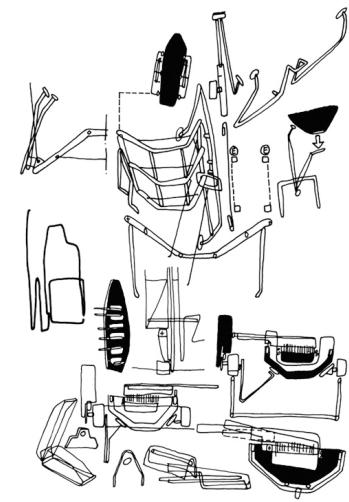
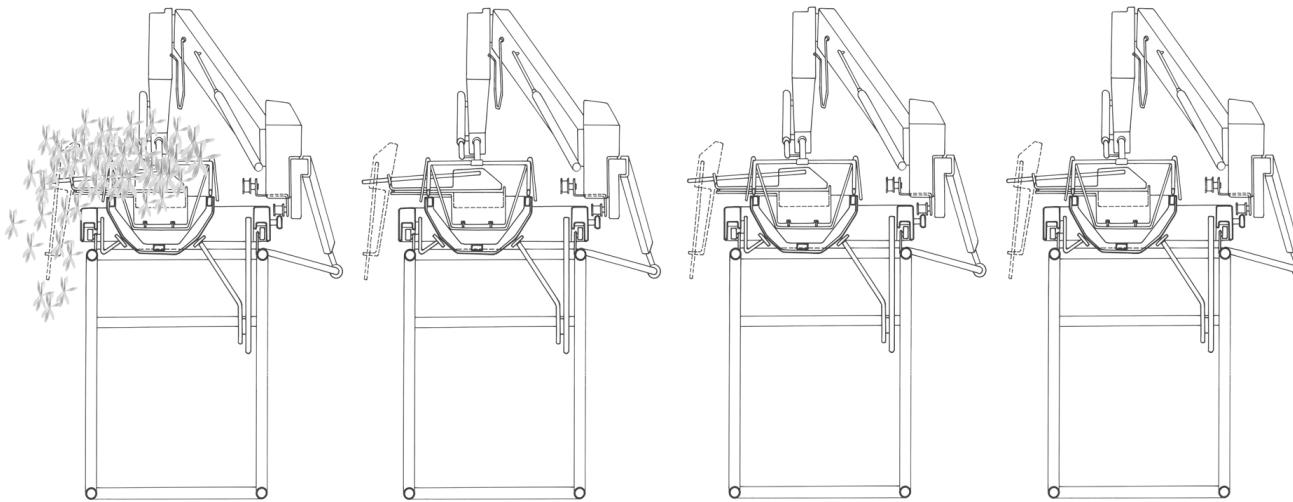


display a tapestry of non-indigenous worldwide vegetation. Its multitude of color changes is alien to the seasonal and severe climatic conditions of Chicago. The scheme also develops an ecological cycle of migrated plants, where a new eco-system begins to foster.

The gardens are gently placed on a series of light weight pier structures pinned into the water's edge, while the meadow remains untouched. By day, all the floating gardens are deployed onto the lake by remote controlled cranes. In doing so, the pier structures lift into their vertical configuration, revealing the overgrown meadow again. This performance mirrors that of the draw bridges around the city. On a diurnal cycle, the structures return to their horizontal positions, collecting the floating gardens and shifting them back in place for the night. Movements of boats are either remote controlled or sailed into the lake by public gardeners. With these conditions the choreography of garden is endless.

The skyscraper-plant-nursery is an inhabitable south-facing glass structure, echoing the dominance of glass facades in Chicago. As a center for cultivating non-indigenous flowers, vegetables, and rare seedlings, it supplies plants to the floating gardens and the rest of Chicago. Each individual glass seedling box is accessed via a vertical farming device similar to that of a window-cleaning system on neighboring skyscrapers.





The plant-nursery is capped by a sky garden with hydroponically grown trees. The trees symbolize freedom, democracy and liberation. Exalted views of Lake Michigan and the city allow the community to experience spatial conditions normally accessible only to the exclusive few.

As well as being the entrance to the floating gardens and DuSable Park, it also defines the end of Grant Park. At the bottom of this vertical structure are located the public bathing facilities, gardening tool/material storage cupboards, a retractable open-deck market, and a small kitchen. On Sundays, at the end of each month, fresh produce from the floating gardens are sold on the open-market. For a small fee the kitchen can prepare picnic baskets using local produce. On a clear mid-summer's evening with Chicago as the backdrop, the community can dine in boats, amongst the floating gardens on Lake Michigan.