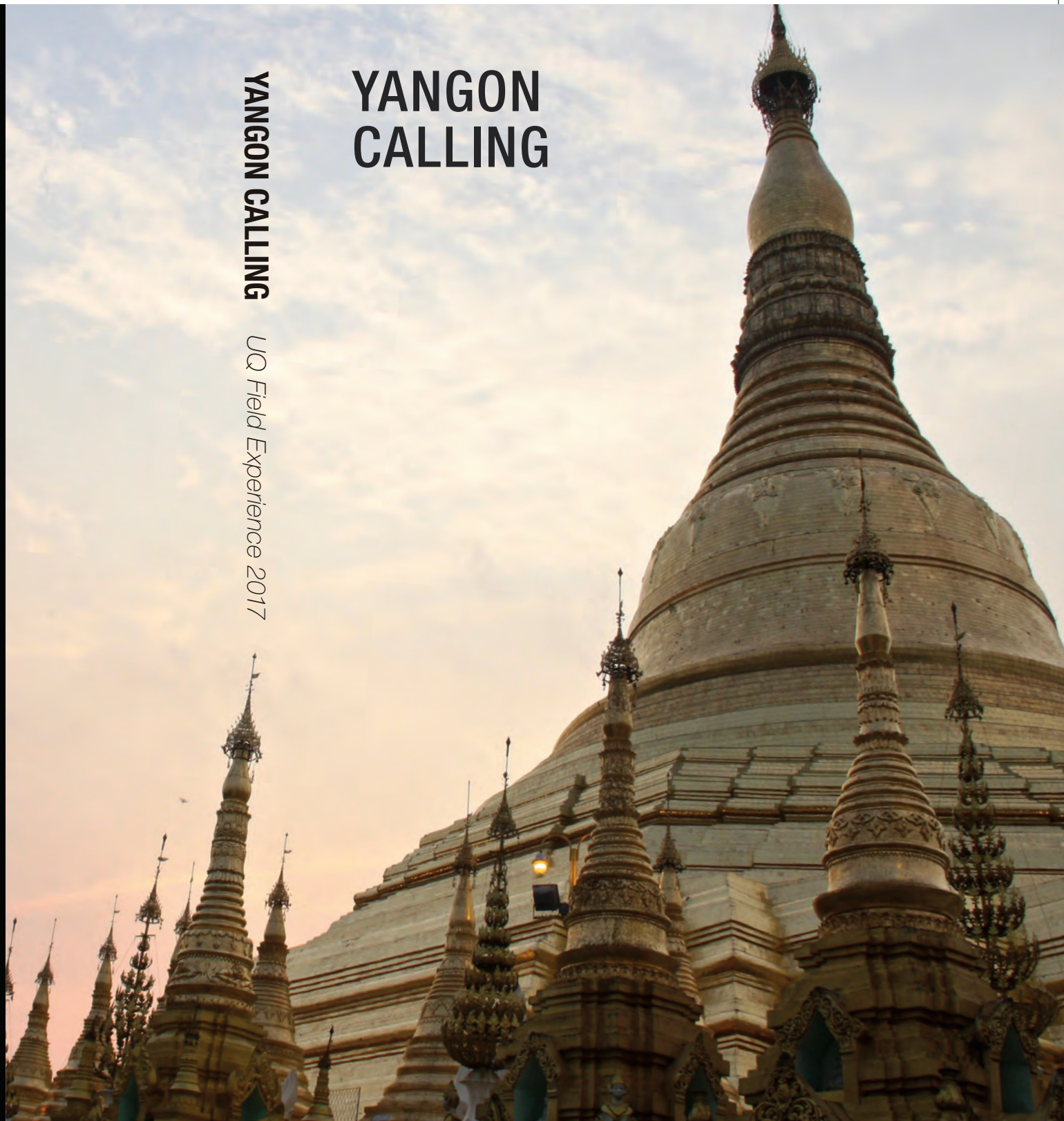


# YANGON CALLING

YANGON CALLING

UQ Field Experience 2017



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

school of  
architecture



NEW COLOMBO PLAN

Connect to Australia's future - study in the region

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Designed and edited by Thomas Brown and Malakai Smith



**school of**  
**architecture**



**NEW COLOMBO PLAN**  
Connect to Australia's future - study in the region

# FOREWORD

What follows is our saga.

Yangon is not a place that easily relinquishes visitors. The city is a tapestry of innumerable different threads of history, culture, religion and cuisines, but to understand this complex, tiered, present Yangon one must first delve into its past.

Yangon was first founded in the early 11th Century as Dagon, a small fishing village organised around the Shwedagon Pagoda. It was only renamed Yangon after being captured by Alaungpaya in the mid-18th Century. After a war with the British Empire starting in 1824, serious fire damage in 1841 and another Anglo-Burmese war in 1852, the city entered a colonial period under the British, who by the early 20th Century had built infrastructure and services said by some to rival those of London.

It was only after World War II, during which Yangon suffered terrible damage, that Myanmar (formerly Burma) obtained independence. Following independence, the government of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, characterised by its neglect and mismanagement brought about what was perhaps Yangon's darkest hour: The Four Eights Uprising. So called for taking place on the 8th of August '88, these enormous protests lasted a little over a month before being violently suppressed with reportedly thousands of civilian casualties by the infamous junta that ruled Burma from that day until its dissolution in 2011.

This infamous regime, styling itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council, leant towards open market policies that attracted investment to the city of Yangon, forcing many former Downtown residents out and into satellite settlements around the train line. New money resulted in Yangon's high rise offices, hotels and malls jeopardising the large number of unique colonial buildings beneath this new skyline. Through the lobbying of concerned citizens who formed the Yangon Heritage Trust, around 200 of these treasures, one of the largest concentrations of colonial heritage anywhere, were identified and earmarked for preservation. Our visit to Yangon focused on issues arising from the city's struggle between heritage and modernity.

Before leaving Brisbane, the group conducted research on Myanmar and Yangon so as to arrive with some useful background. Though a useful exercise to develop contextual understanding, in hindsight nothing could replace actual experience of the raw spirit of Yangon. We were greeted by banquet for all five

senses. Fragrance at every corner, a perfume to the visual curiosities of the developing world brought to life by unique sounds all ambushing our incomplete expectations. The enthusiastic traffic competes with an unbroken song of prayers emanating from the nearest pagoda and is often punctuated by a sizzle of whichever spattering street food pan happens to be closest.

The isolation imposed by the junta for decades incubated an authentic and largely untouched culture, which our detached research never could anticipate or fathom. Our understanding of people and place would need to adapt to the realities of the situation previously imperceptible to us, helped immensely by the local expertise of the Myanmar students with whom we collaborated on the designs.

Recalling the experience of Yangon is akin to trying to pick out the still frames of a spinning film reel. The intensive two weeks provided more than invaluable experience, it gave us precious memories. The memories to which we hope these pages will do justice...

---

*Thomas Brown*

UQ Architecture 2017

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We extend the warmest gratitude to the following people, all of whom assisted in making our trip a resounding success. Without them we would have had nowhere near the same benefit of local knowledge and expertise to inform our understanding of Yangon.

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Australian Embassy, Yangon







CHAPTER 1  
PLACE





# ANCIENT BEAUTY

—  
*Marco Morlotti*



- 1 YOUNG PRAYER
- 2 GOLDEN CIRCLE
- 3 REFLECTING GOLD
- 4 YOUNG MONK



Upon my arrival, I was immediately exposed to her true beauty. Some perceived Yangon as old, worn and tired, however, she touched me in a very different manner. I saw through her poverty and instead looked into her heart - her rich spirit that she had maintained after all these years.

Listening to her colourful stories about those that she had welcomed before us, I experienced the culture of her children and a key way in which I was able to achieve this was through appreciating

her architecture. I walked in circles, sketching and taking pictures of the ravishing golden structures that surrounded me on every corner.

The heat of the tiles pierced through the soles of my bare feet, whilst my hands and eyes depicted the beauty around. The intense rays of light reflected off the pagodas, radiating their luxurious colours onto my skin. She really wasn't scared to hide.



# BALCONIES

—  
*Julia Comer*



- 1 WALKING THROUGH THE BACKSTREETS
- 2 BALCONY ABOVE THE SHOP, 34TH ST
- 3 CONNECTION WITH THE OUTSIDE
- 4 CORNER UNIT IN THE SUN
- 5 COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

1	2	3
		4
		5



Despite our studio-related pursuits being largely focussed on informal street life, public spaces and integration of colonial buildings, one aspect of the Yangon city fabric that I found particularly intriguing were the ways in which people occupied their own personal residential spaces.

Coming from cities where the urban life is characterised often by homogenous apartment blocks with a strong disconnection from the street and few identifiable qualities, I found it fascinating

to observe the degree to which the people of downtown Yangon made their own small spaces their own.

These photos and sketches that I have collected attempt to represent the richness and vitality present in the streets of Yangon experienced on the vertical axis. This, I have captured in detail and larger scale, exhibiting the creativity and inventiveness in a way that I feel truly represents the city as a whole and the people that I came into contact with.





# CARRYING THE TORCH

—  
*Phoebe Carr*



- 1 MYANMAR ECONOMIC BANK
- 2 CITY HALL
- 3 SECRETARIAT BUILDING
- 4 CUSTOMS HOUSE



Yangon is a cityscape dominated by crumbling architecture. Whether it be an ancient monument or a 70's hotel, a recurring theme is the state of disrepair. In this city of architectural neglect, the vast majority of historical and colonial buildings have failed the test of time.

There are however, a few select buildings that have persevered. Such rare instances exist in the form of towers and spires which pop up unexpectedly above the trees, they have likely endured as a

result of being predominantly uninhabited. While possibly seen as somewhat 'tired', these standouts have remained relatively unscathed throughout Yangon's developmental history. Hidden beneath telecommunication wiring and clotheslines, the partially dilapidated structures lend the city a kind of rustic beauty. These enduring monuments remind the Burmese people, and those just visiting, of a rich colonial past, and provide a foundation for developers to carry forward and pay homage to an otherwise disappearing part of Yangon's history.



- 1 AGD BANK, PANSODAN ROAD
- 2 MYOMA KYAUNG STREET
- 3 16TH STREET
- 4 YANGON CENTRAL
- 5 LANMADAW ROAD

7	2	3
	4	4
	5	5
	6	6
	7	7

# CROSSING

*Billy McQueenie*

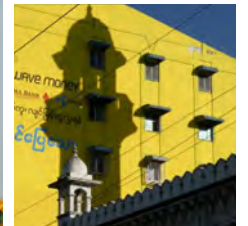
A curious remnant of post-dictatorship Yangon is found in the lack of motorcycles. Unique to most other Southeast Asian cities, intercity transport is limited to cars, buses, and bikes. The congestion of traffic and low speeds of the bikes bring down the pace of the city - something that seems to be compounded by the muggy heat of the Burmese summer.

Foot traffic and street vendors dominate the footpath and spill out onto the streets. The constant

occupation and lethargic movement becomes captivating - the city, slow as it is, is constantly in motion.

A shop front, train station platform, or toilet block becomes a backdrop for the constant play of people and activities on the street. After constantly being immersed in the goings-on of the city, to stop and take a view across the street can offer a moment of quiet - a second of removal - before joining in the animation of the city again.





- 1 LOCAL RELIGIOUS DRESS
- 2 SHWEDAGON PAGODA
- 3 HINDU TEMPLE
- 4 SHADOW OF MOSQUE MINARET
- 5 HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL



# CRUCIBLE OF RELIGION

Matthew Walton

Temples, churches, mosques and pagodas sit side by side in the cosmopolitan city of Yangon; cohabitating peacefully, a refreshing change from current global events.

The centre point of downtown Yangon is home to what is thought to be the oldest pagoda and the oldest mosque in the city. Sitting adjacent to each other, both are still used for worship today.

As locals pass by one to get to the other, their smiles

indicate that they are in fact not weighed down by their differing faith, but rather, that they focus on their common humanity.

Yangon is a city of variety, and religion is no exception. Yet, instead of causing tension, this variety enriches the city of Yangon.





1	2	3
	4	
	5	

- 1 RING RAIL MERCHANT
- 2 AFTERNOON IN CHINA TOWN
- 3 MAHA BANDULA PARK
- 4 YANGON TAXI BOATS
- 5 WASHING ON COLONIAL BALCONY

# DAILY LIFE

*Lachlan Sweet*

Out on the streets, in the parks, on the balconies, in the temples. Daily life in Yangon is of a public nature. Religion is a day with the family at the pagoda. Lunch is provided by the nearest vendor, sitting out on the streets around tiny tables, on tiny chairs. The daily commute to work is an intimate boat ride across the river Yangon or being hassled by a tea merchant while riding the city's ring rail. Weekends are the whole city gathering in Maha Bandula Park and lazy afternoons are spent sitting outdoors in comfortable silence with strangers or friends.

It seemed to me that all facets of daily life were played out for everyone to witness or participate in.

As a foreigner, the daily grind of life in Yangon was noteworthy. Experiencing new smells and written language. Or being surrounded by run down British colonial architecture next to outdated urban apartments. These superficial distinctions were interesting and exciting. However, I left Yangon feeling that the true cultural value came from the communal daily living that exuded life and energy.



- 1 LUCKY FLOWER
- 2 LONG DAY
- 3 STREET GAMES
- 4 BETEL NUT
- 5 DRIED FISH

1	2	3
	4	4
	5	5

## FROM ABOVE

—  
*Stephen Saines*

Looking down as we walk the streets; children play games, women sell dried fish, men are rolling betel nut and others sleep through the tropical heat of midday. The everyday lives of so many people occur in the public realm, and provides the city with richness, colour and diversity. We squeeze through the crowds and vendors, watching our feet as not to step on someone's mangoes or fall into an open sewer.

The Lucky Flower is a small Tea house that

absorbs the life of the street. It is here that simple architectural elements and colourful decor provide respite from the city's fierce heat and busy, congested streets. We sit on kid-size, brightly coloured plastic chairs, around equally small tables, the scale of which suits the tight space we inhabit but i feel out of proportion as my knees bend at acute angles. We order a round of Myanmar tea - a strong brew of green tea, mixed with a cavity inducing serve of sweetened condensed milk, that settles on the bottom of your cup.



- 1 THE YANGON TELEGRAPH OFFICE
- 2 LOOKING OUT THE TRAIN WINDOW
- 3 AN APARTMENT'S SCREEN
- 4 TAKING NOTES



## HAND-DRAWN STORIES

*Isabella Reynolds*

In a city as complex and evolving as Yangon, it is easy to get overwhelmed. For me, putting pencil to paper helped me to analyze and understand the details of the city. I have found that in concentrating on the shadow or the line of a subject I am able to understand it more fully. Drawing the steel screen, for example, amplified the repetition that existed in the object itself. Although my drawings couldn't communicate exactly how hot or humid it was in the city, they begin to explain some of the moments enjoyed by both me and others on the trip.

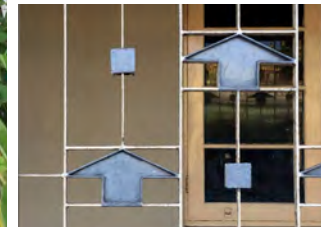
In drawing the Yangon Government Telegraph Office, I was able to take in just how particular the details of the facade were, and how symmetrical the building design was. Even though the series of drawings began as a simple document of a moment or object, they ended up as an exploration into light and pattern in what was a completely new city to me.





# INTERSTICES

*Kristian Meredith*



- 1 VENEERED THRESHOLD
- 2 SERPENTINE
- 3 PRIVATE REALM
- 4 PATTERN & COLOUR
- 5 PUBLIC REALM
- 6 ORNAMENT & COLOUR



Screens that can be dismissed as a security measure on reflection could be seen as an expression of the occupant. The majority are too flimsy to be a barrier against any would be criminals. These elaborate screens potentially are more an operable privacy layer, in what is nominally a very short threshold between the intensity of Yangon's public streets and the private spaces behind.

The sometimes elaborate, and sometimes austere patterns that are used have been crafted from metal

sheet and bar that is folded, cut and layered to allow varying degrees of permeability between these two very different worlds, the public and the private.

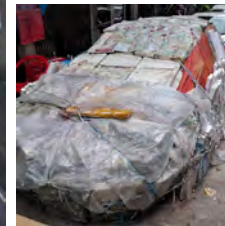
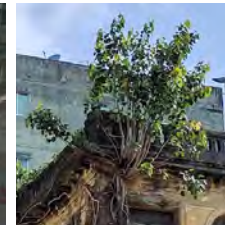
The selected colours, that would not be out of place in a 1920s modern palette combine with the patina of the city to create what is Yangon's city vernacular.



# LOOKING CLOSELY

—  
*Thomas Brown*

1	2	3	6
		4	7
		5	



- 1 STREET SMART
- 2 NO JUNK MAIL
- 3 CAUSE
- 4 EFFECT
- 5 INSURANCE POLICY
- 6 RETIRED
- 7 ENLIGHTENED SOLE

Days after plunging into Yangon's atmosphere the sense of regime began to leave me. The gentle chaos of this place becomes narcotic, always drawing my nervous system into the kaleidoscopic rabbit hole of sensory moments.

The agile nature of the city deftly sidesteps my analysis through a camera lens and parries any cumbersome assumptions made at a glance. I can't be sure if this is owing to Yangon's almost Homeric history and cross cultural tapestry of inhabitants but

then again, Yangon doesn't want me to be sure. It wouldn't be such an incredulous place if I was.

Metaphors and relationships are enshrouded across the matrix of alleyways. They drape the decaying colonialism and disrepair of the urban fabric over them as though it were camouflage. It's a joy to hunt for them.

Look closer, but take care not to get tangled in the hanging letterboxes.





1	2	3
	4	5



- 1 BRITISH HISTORY, LOCAL LIFE
- 2 SUBURBAN DENSITY
- 3 A PAUSE AMONGST THE CROWD
- 4 URBAN DENSITY
- 5 STATIONARY POLICE

# MOTION

—  
*Hamish Buchhorn*

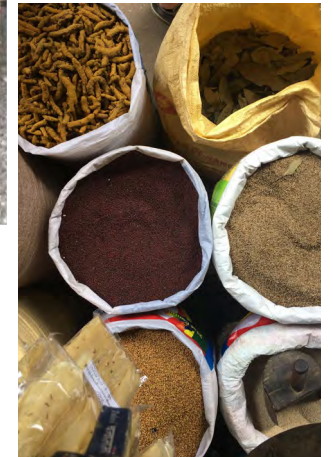
Motion in Myanmar is presented here in both the urban and suburban context. Whilst the urban context shows the true fast paced life of the inner city, the motion captured in the suburban context shows how the bustle radiates out to surround even the most local of places.

The juxtaposition of density, but the commonality of life and movement in these images enable an interesting observation of the life in and around the cityscape.

For me, image 1 captures the most poignant fact about Myanmar, but shows, through motion, what could be considered as the countries recovery, from British rule.

Ultimately, it is interesting to reflect how a stationary image, can show the raw energy of a city. Each of these photos has a different subject but their commonality is motion. In considering this, it really reinforces the city as a lively place motioning forwards rapidly.





1 PRECEDING SALAD  
 2 CUCUMBERS  
 3 GINGER  
 4 SPICES

1 | 2 | 3  
 4

# FOOD ON THE STREETS

—  
*Cassidy Baas*

Balmy days on the streets of Yangon, it felt like we were walking around an old colonial movie set, sprinkled intermittently with some fabulous art deco towers and vernacular shelters. Everywhere we ventured, the colourful city seemed to be ornamented with satellite dishes and umbrellas.

Produce decorated the centre of the market roads, allowing traffic to roll over the vegetables, leaving the neat piles of tomatoes ripe and in tact. With the chanting from the Pagodas circling our ears we tailed Pedro around on foot and tried hard not to get run over by the unpredictable flow of traffic that the every local seemed to navigate so well.

The only thing that proved more impossible to navigate than the traffic was the food. Cooked and sold above the open drains, the street samosas sold for 10c each and despite all odds stacked against them, they were digested without complications. After surviving the samosas, the Rangoon Tea House, with an interior resembling a Melbourne café, certainly seemed to be a safe bet.

This, however, was not the outcome. Like my severe gastro, the memory of my time in Yangon will stay with me for a long time to come.



1 | 2 | 3 | 4



1 OVERGROWTH  
2 HABITAT  
3 SYMBIOSIS  
4 CONTRAST

# OVERGROWTH

—  
*Andru Barrass*

Sunlight weaves between the concrete and brick jungle, the contemporary urban vernacular, now soaring out of the once fertile ground. With a curious intent, I find my vision is drawn higher and higher, my gaze constantly dancing over the often eccentric and decaying facades, my mind absorbing every weathered detail that is offered for my consumption. Where mighty trees once stood, these concrete and brick towers, symbols of progress, power and prosperity, both of past and present, now replace them.

Providing contrast against the cold surface of the man made I find the line between built and natural begins to gracefully blur as Mother Nature slowly reclaims what once was, ending the struggle, as man made and vegetation concedes to coexist in an almost symbiotic relationship. Finding myself captivated by the romanticism of the functional decay I can't help but consider that it is surely for without human interaction that these structures would slowly, but surely, return to the Earth for which they once came.





# CHARACTERS

—  
*Lara Rann*

1	2	3	6
		4	7
		5	



- 1 NEXT STOP
- 2 MAN CARRYING SUGAR CANE
- 3 MOTHER
- 4 BURMESE DAZE
- 5 THANAKA
- 6 MONKS ON A TRAIN
- 7 MAN STARES AT TOURISTS

40 degrees. Linen. Do you have any hand sanitiser? Longyis. Cotton. Is betel addictive? Street vendors. Kids chairs. Who's chanting? It's just a short walk! Sweat. Myanmar Beer. Advertisements. Tea leaf salad. Pagoda. Gold. Take off your shoes! Wow, these stones are hot. Swerving. Telegraph poles. Can you slow down I feel sick? Wires. Water. Flowers. Jade. Rubies. Do you want to buy? Fans. Scarfs. Straw hats. That'll be 2000 Kyat. I can tailor it. 10 minutes. Right now. Why don't they have electric sewing machines? Best price. Very good price. Special deal for the kind lady. Can I get a coke? Coke? Coca-Cola? The showers have no heat limiters! Burns. No kissing. No power. No

key, no worries. Who the most famous Burmese architect? Stale air. Close call with a sewer. Most architects here are female? Waste disposal. Let's stock up on water. Don't drink the bubble tea! Don't eat the eggplant curry! Drink water! Eat sugar! Woks. Steam. Oil. You should try my family's food! Delicious! I feel sick. Humidity. Bushman's Tropical Strength. Sand. Mopeds. Does drinking hot beverages cool you down? Do we tip here? Junior Duck. Min-ga-la-ba.





- 1 SIDEWALK SAMOSA
- 2 STOP GO
- 3 WHAT'S YOUR DAY JOB
- 4 LONGTABLE EATERS



# A CITY IN ITS PEOPLE

—  
*Acacia Stevenson*

A city of overwhelming flux and constant movement. Places and traces of time and action are evident everywhere, leaving remnant aftertastes in the fruity air of both the places that have disappeared and the ones that still linger.

I begin to know a city by its fragments. People mind the street, calm amongst the chaos. Here everyone wants to be their own boss. Nationalist fervour pulses quietly - bubbling underneath the surface of cement roads, cracking pathways like tree roots. Green net shade cloths billow in the open air, inhaling and exhaling with the rest of us.

Chicken blood stains the bitumen brighter than the

paan spit stains. The darkness of the spice market reminds me of a theatre, or how I imagine an underground New York City Jazz Club where space is intimate and consuming, and divided by layers of warm lighting.

Smells of the smoking tarmac intermingle with cinammon and cardamon to fill the interlude between dusk and dawn. The waft of egg under an umbrella stall is consuming, caught and held inflating the tarp structure like a hot air balloon, vanishing as I return to the expanse of the blue sky.



- 1 THEATRE OF MYANMAR TEA
- 2 THEATRE OF BAGAN
- 3 THEATRE OF PILGRIMAGE
- 4 THEATRE OF THE TEMPLE
- 5 THEATRE OF ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION

1 | 2 | 3  
 | 4  
 | 5

# THEATRES

—  
*Mackenzie Barclay*

Yangon is a city of chaos, organized chaos comprised of various spaces in which life occurs, such is the general composition of all cities. Despite the sporadic forms and qualities of these formless spaces, into which the lives of locals are grafted, spaces with seemingly theatrical quality show themselves through the flow of daily life.

To me these places appeared to be the only ones that perfectly matched their occupation, and furthermore held a capacity for anything - or

nothing. Simplicity in the otherwise indecipherable fabric of the city attains a modest grandeur; in these places you felt you became a part of the life of the city, no longer a spectator.

Everything that occurred in these spaces appeared theatrical: monks smoking at the top of a viewing tower, children running a tea house, religious groups making pilgrimage. Even without occupation these spaces still entertained the possibility of predictability and purpose with subtle beauty.





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- 1 THE APPETITION OF ADAM
- 2 THE GRAND BIZARRE
- 3 NATURAL HABITAT
- 4 THE FLEXIBLE CABOOSE
- 5 IRON CITIES



# TRAIN SHACK

—  
*Malakai Smith*

I regularly frequent the sardine cans of the east coast, pushed up against and reading my neighbor's paper, no stranger to the nuances of public transport. However, when I stepped aboard at the Yangon Central Station I was immediately struck by a sense of disquiet; the train was spacious, doors a foreign concept as people hung outside shoeing off dogs

A few stops down the line, merchants began to fill the train, peddling wares before departing further along the line for a return journey. A few stops further as we pulled up to a fringe station-turned-market, the carriage had turned into a veritable bazaar, laden with all sorts of vegetables, spices,

and foodstuffs. Something that, to me, had only ever existed in fantasy was unfolding before my eyes, and it was at this point that the reality of where I was began to set in. The train functioned beyond a means of transport or sight-seeing, for the locals it was a livelihood.

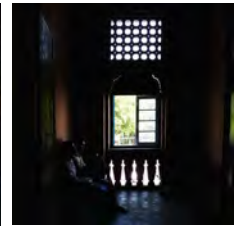
Before long I too found myself hanging wildly out the door of a ramshackle community on wheels, inches from the wandering locals, sprawling villages, and an ever-increasing variety of wildlife that called the ring line their home.





# GLANCE

—  
*Nyoah Rosmarin*



- 1 YANGON CIRCULAR TRAIN
- 2 SHWEDAGON PAGODA
- 3 YANGON HERITAGE TRUST
- 4 SULE PAGODA
- 5 BAGAN

1 | 2 | 3  
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The train window of the Yangon Circular Rail is always moving, recording glimpses of the outdoor landscape. The rail wraps the city from the downtown area to the more rural northern regions. As such, the view becomes a series of different environments and provides an insight into the varying conditions of Yangon. At each station and closer to downtown, the window frames the vernacular housing almost living on the tracks. Traveling north, the series of views seamlessly unify into a flat and dense landscape.

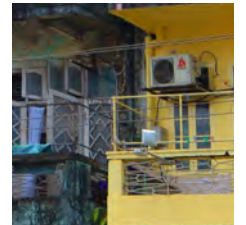
At Shwedagon Pagoda the lattice window primarily illuminates the grand interior walkway. It implies the massive complex that rests behind by providing fragmented visibility through to the other side. The outlines of the pagoda seep through the crevices and intensify the closer you get to the summit.

Here in Yangon the window is a very different experience to my past encounters, partly because of the window itself, but mostly because of the view through it.



# YANGON IN COLOUR

—  
*Siubhan Rudge*



- 1 BURMESE POLLOCK
- 2 PURPLE PORTAL
- 3 INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION
- 4 VERDANT SPLASH
- 5 SUNBURST BALCONY

1 | 2 |  $\frac{3}{4}$   
| |  $\frac{4}{5}$

Walking through the streets of Yangon one can't help but notice bold splashes of vibrant colour coating the old colonial buildings. Although the buildings of Yangon have been neglected over the years, the state of drab decay was disguised by striking and unique façade treatments. The bold colour and satellite décor creates a new energy and exotic flavour that mimics that of the local culture.

Each individual apartment becomes a reflection of the local owner's personality, helping distinguish one apartment complex from another.

The occupants use their own choice of colour and material to decorate their dwelling exterior, forming

a unique patchwork quilt over the building. It was liberating to see such an individualistic approach to each building facade in their DIY apartment decoration.

Allowing individuals such freedom to create something personal provides a cost effective way and creative way of adding a unique charm to the old colonial buildings, providing new sense of life while maintaining their history and heritage.





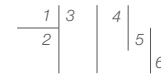
CHAPTER 2  
—  
HERITAGE





Yangon, laid out by Bengal Engineer Lieutenant Alexander Fraser, is unusual for a British Colonial city in its uncompromisingly regular city blocks. This uniformity is relieved by an axial acknowledgment of the Sule Pagoda, a magical circular golden beacon embedded in the unvarying fabric. Throughout this dense urban mass with some tree-lined streets, nearly every building speaks of better days. Among these casualties of time there are wonderfully surprising survivors from Rangoon's prosperity under British rule.

Henry Hoyne-Fox's great rambling red brick Secretariat complex, from which Burma was ruled, occupies a whole sixteen-hectare city block. Arcaded verandahs protect most of the building from the harsh sun with some parts of the classical architecture breaking free from concessions to climate, having to be corrected by incongruous timber shading devices added to bring comfort.



- 1 SECRETARIAT THROUGH THE POINCIANA
- 2 AWNING DETAIL, SECRETARIAT
- 3 SECRETARIAT, SOUTH FACADE
- 4 CLOCK TOWER, HIGH COURT
- 5 HIGH COURT FROM MAHA BANDOOLA
- 6 TURRET, TOWN HALL

Built on weak ground with inadequate foundations, parts of the complex betray signs of differential settlement that also contributed to a major dome being removed after an earthquake weakened the structure.

James Ramsome, the first architectural consultant to the Government of India designed the High Court, also in red brick. This imposing group with its prominent clock-tower faces the large park, Maha Bandoola Garden, one of the very few open

spaces in the city. Parts of the building have been restored, lifting it out of the decay that surrounds it in the once proud institutional structures such as the neighbouring Posts and Telegraph building. Nearby, also facing the park is Yangon's Town Hall. Its principal façade, designed by U Thin was the first public building to embrace an architectural language based upon Burmese precedents.

Robert Fellows Chisholm brought familiar gothic elements carefully adjusted to the climate in his



- 1 HOLY TRINITY
- 2 ST MARY
- 3 ACCOUNTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
- 4 GENERAL POST OFFICE
- 5 NATIONAL BANK OF INDIA

design for the Anglican Holy Trinity Cathedral. His generous porte-cochere under a bold spired tower is a far-cry from his more well known 'Indo-Saracenic' work in Madras and South India. Within easy walking distance, the far grander Catholic St Mary Cathedral asserts its presence with twin towers. Designed by Dutch architect Jos Cuyper is a rare example of a major building in a British colony designed by a foreign architect. The lofty interior is vaulted in brick and external buttresses and arched overhangs protect the narrow windows from the sun.

Among the many surviving colonial buildings, perhaps the most striking is the former National Bank of India, designed by the young New Zealander Basil Ward in about 1930. In partnership with Thomas Oliphant Foster, he crafted an intelligent West facing façade, composing a sun-screen in glazed green terracotta tiles between assertive fluted pilasters. Ward's inventive art-deco elevation stands out among a street of imposing banks and the Port Authority building also by him. After leaving Rangoon in the late 1930s, Ward became a founding

partner of the influential British Modernist practice, Connell Ward and Lucas.

Along Strand Road, several public buildings from the colonial era remain, including a grand Customs House and a large General Post Office in the gothic style. Crumbling banks, department stores, hospitals and other colonial jewels make Yangon a city of surprises. Hopefully, they will be treasured and rehabilitated under guidance and care of the Yangon Heritage Trust who have played a key role in ensuring that this unique heritage is valued.







**CHAPTER 3**  
—  
**BAGAN**





1		5	6
2	3	7	
	4	8	

- 1 GRAND PERSPECTIVE
- 2 SUPER STUPA
- 3 NATURE RECLAIMS
- 4 ARCHITECTURAL FRAMING
- 5 GLEAM
- 6 VOID
- 7 JOINERY OVER THE YEARS
- 8 METALLIC FLORISTRY

Field trips away from the field trip weren't initially on the cards.

What started off as a simple passing comment in one of our background meetings before we departed quickly spread into a tangible idea and before long, seven of us had boarded a tiny ATR 72 turboprop and were northward bound from Yangon International's third terminal. Domestic air traffic in Myanmar is so light it doesn't even justify its own airport.

Our destination: The Bagan Archaeological Zone. Easily the largest tourist attraction in Myanmar, this 104km<sup>2</sup> patch of the Mandalay region boasts just over 2200 temples and pagodas which have thus far survived several serious earthquakes.

However, historical estimates put the number of temples constructed on the Bagan plains at over 10 000 around the period from the 9th to 13th Centuries. Bagan, or at that era 'Pagan', was the capital of the Pagan Empire, which held dominion

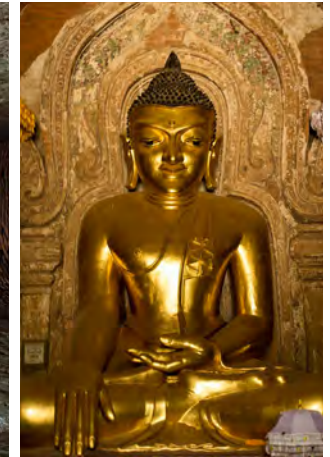
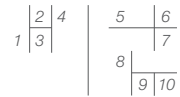
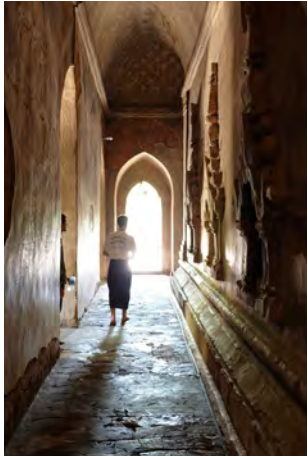
over most of the geography that comprises modern Myanmar. For better or worse, the district has failed to earn listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site so far, allegedly on the account of restorations which do not follow archaeological best practice.

This has an unexpected positive effect though, as in hindsight the freedom we had to explore the landscape would have been severely hampered by tariffs, fences and 'do not enter' signs emblazoned with the UNESCO logo.

We had two days to scamper over as many temples as we possibly could with the assistance of hired bikes. Our first ascent brought us to a breathtaking vista. 360 degrees of tree line smudged with a heat haze and perforated by needles of red brick, and it was shaded.

From then on, we lived an Indiana Jones movie, only without the rolling boulder. The weather fit the mould though, beating us with a sweltering 10 degrees more than the average back in Yangon and at one





- 1 SANCTUM
- 2 UP IN THE RAFTERS
- 3 ENSCONSED
- 4 MAINTENANCE
- 5 SHIFTING LIGHT SHAFTS
- 6 GILDED REVERENCE
- 7 SHOWING AGE
- 8 MONKEY NUT
- 9 FLOATING PUPPETS
- 10 ONE STOP WATER SHOP

point forcing us to descend a temple in the middle of a sandstorm. Red dirt tracks led us on through the remnants of a millennium as we floated through the countless fields of crumbling brickwork on top of silent electric motors.

Still moments were waiting to be discovered inside the sanctums of the monasteries. The air in these places is so cool one might expect to see an A/C exhaust in one of the apertures higher up. Shafts of illuminance play with each other and betray the

careful planning of coordinated windows to bring a small amount of sunlight a surprisingly far way into the building. All the time, plaster paintings sit on the walls, time tested artwork finished to an impressive level of resolution. The faded knees of the buddhas also belie the fact that this is no façade dedicated to tourism. Locals still hold the districts' ancient structures in high regard, as did we.

Then all the bikes ran out of power.



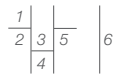




2



- 1 PHASE ONE: BAMBOO AND HORSE HAIR WEAVE
- 2 PHASE TWO: PAINT ON SEVEN COATS OF LAQUER
- 3 PHASE THREE: APPLY PIGMENT
- 4 PHASE 4: WASH AND PREPARE
- 5 PHASE 5: ETCH AND ENGRAVE
- 6 PHASE 6: FINISHED PRODUCT







**CHAPTER 4**  
**PROPOSALS**



## The Brief

# BURMESE FAVOURITE CO.



Collaborating with students from Yangon Technological University, the groups below will develop solutions to supplement an internal retrofit of the Burmese Favourite Co. building. They will examine the adjacent civic areas for opportunities to create small to medium scale urban renewal schemes that will activate the buildings' surrounds.



### THE TEAMS

*Andru Barrass  
Hamish Buchhorn  
Phoebe Carr  
Marco Morlotti*

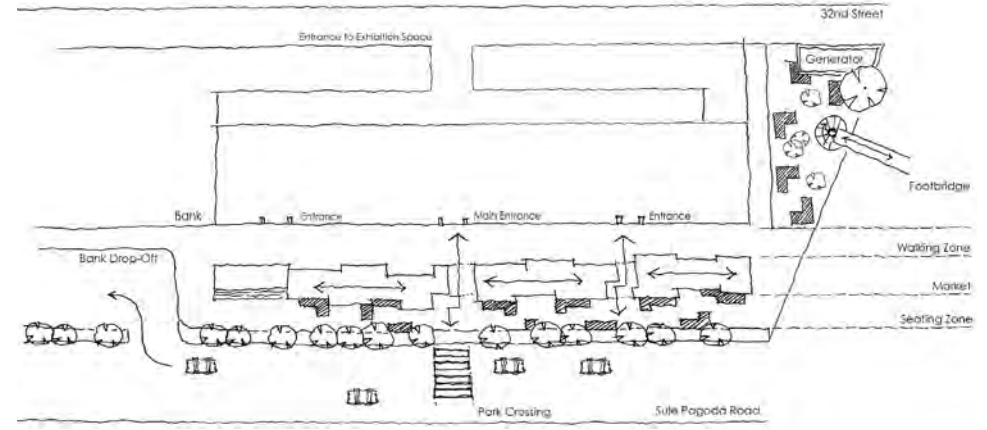
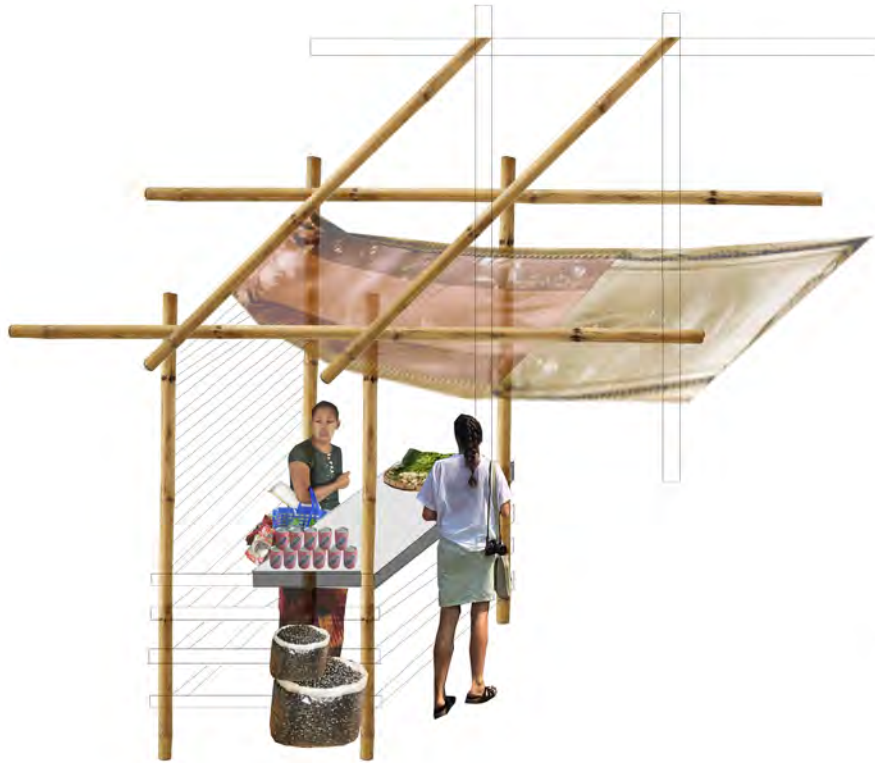
*Cassidy Baas  
Julia Comer  
Lara Rann  
Siubhan Rudge*

*Malakai Smith  
Thomas Brown*

*Billy McQueenie  
Isabella Reynolds  
Acacia Stevenson  
Lachlan Sweet*

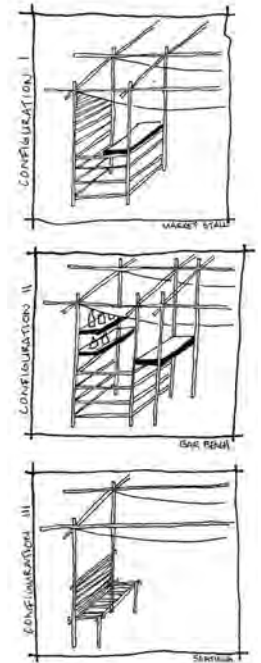
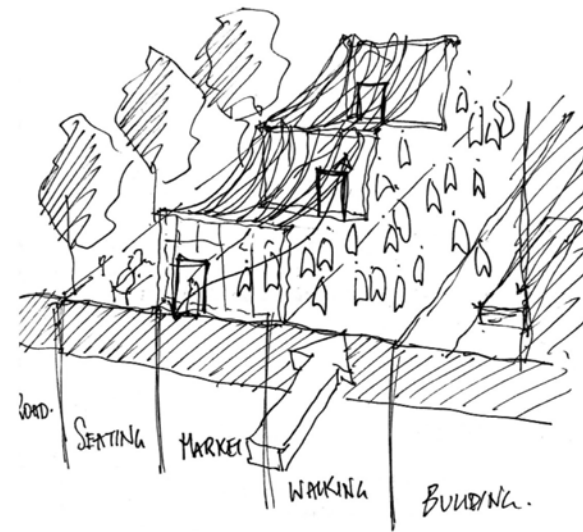
*Matthew Walton  
Kristian Meredith  
Nyoah Rosmarin  
Angelica Roache-Wilson  
Stephen Saines*





# ADAPTATION

*Andru Barrass, Hamish Buchhorn, Phoebe Carr, Marco Morlotti*

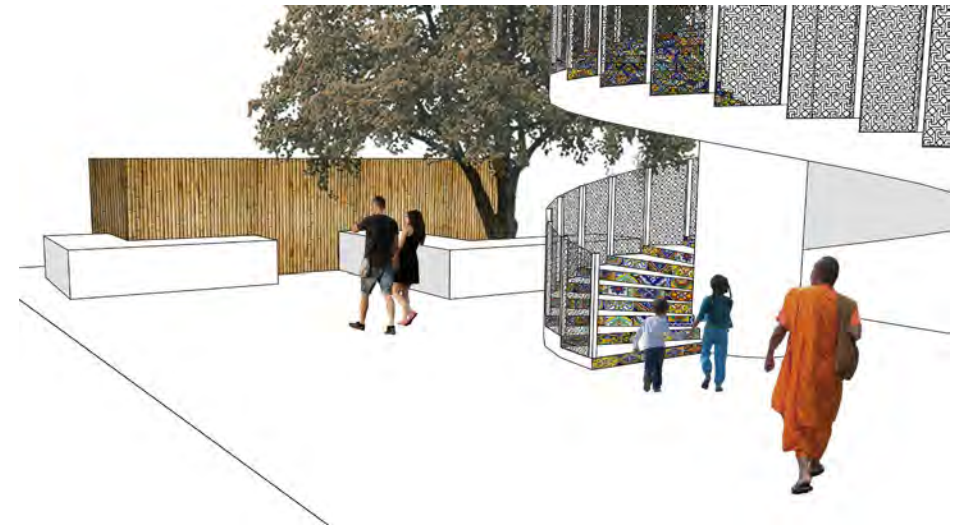


## THE FACADE

Designed with local people in mind the main concept for the front of the building aims to blend traditional Burmese vernacular with the heritage colonial architecture to create a flexible, fun and organic space. As a main structural component, Bamboo is not only a locally sourced, sustainable and high performance material but also draws upon local structural and construction techniques that presents a highly customisable structure with the potential to grow organically as needs and use of the structure evolves. Retractable and colourful covers

on the roof provide shade and protection during the rainy season creating a structure that is a light weight and permeable framework minimising the obstruction of the original building while maximising the potential of the area. Drawing upon elements found within the building the space wraps the front sides of the building to create seating and landscaping opportunities to buffer the road and encourages organic expansion.



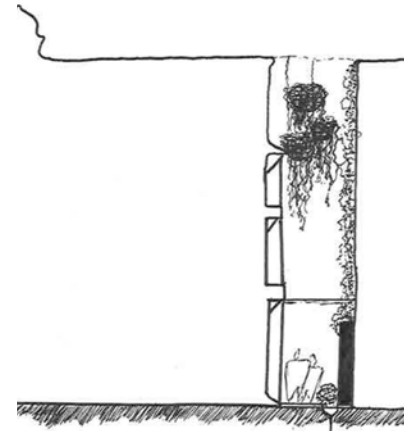


## THE CONNECTION

Capitalising on the opportunity to redefine and blur the existing site boundaries, the side program presents an opportunity to embrace a pivotal transitional space through an organic extension of the programmatic function of the building. Reclaiming an invaluable and underappreciated asset the project aims to create a user friendly, interactive and aesthetically pleasing space that furnishes the building with an opportunity to give something back to the community in a considered, complimentary and compassionate way. Shielding

the building and the users of this street level space from the chaos of the local traffic, the project utilises considered and carefully selected elements to create an architecturally landscaped and interactive barrier that incorporates and compliments surrounding function. Forming a publicly accessible contemplative space for users of the building and the wider community to relax and re-energize, the side of the building continues to build upon the theme for adaptive re-use of space by incorporating and re-imagining the vital connection to the Sule



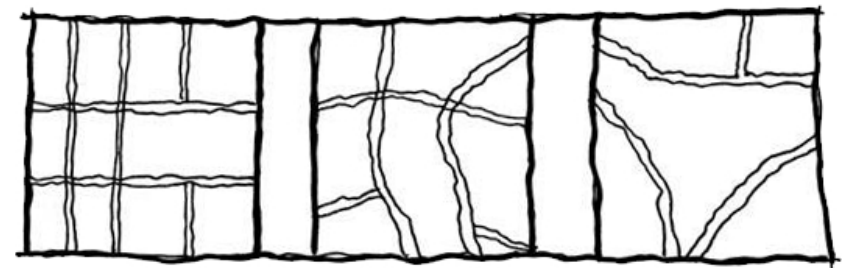
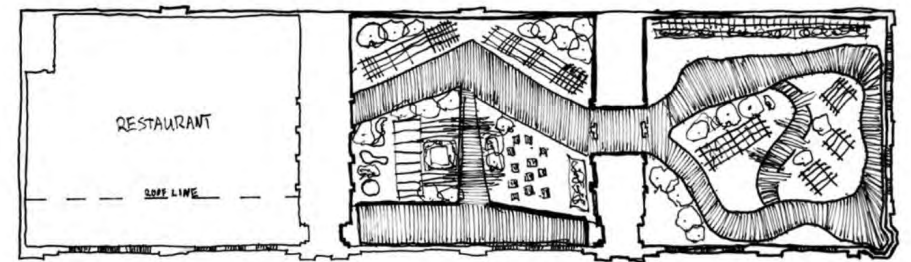
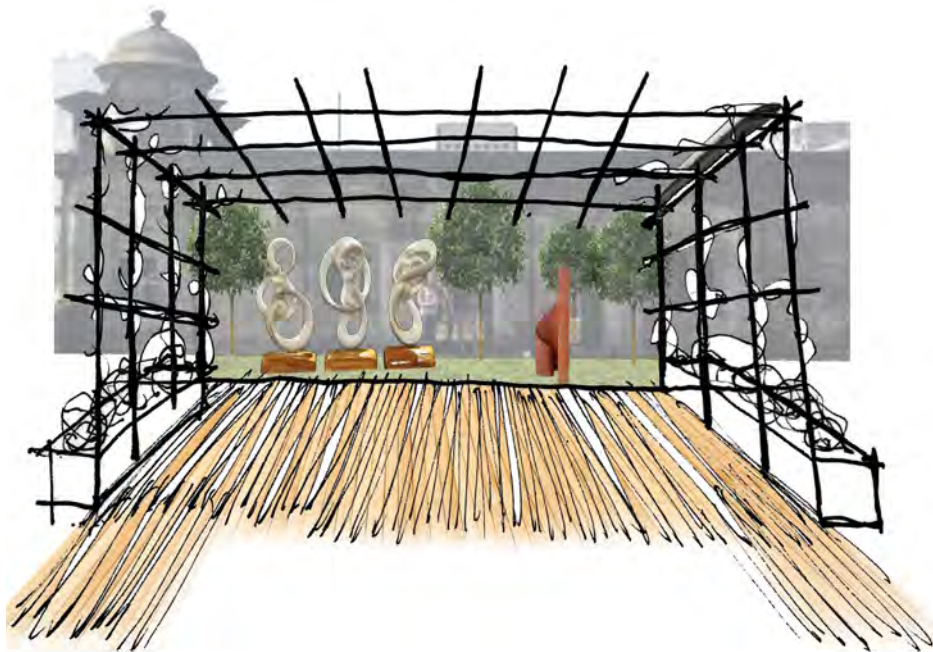


## THE LANEWAY

Through a redefinition of local understanding and traditional use of the existing service laneway the proposal aims to produce a seamless and complementary extension to the programmatic function of the building while offering neighbouring buildings an opportunity to positively engage with and benefit from the transformation of the space. Drawing upon worldwide best practice examples on the transformation and evolution of laneway culture the proposal suggests an organically flexible space that embraces and nurtures the

rapidly emerging contemporary art scene in Yangon. Capitalising on the surrounding walls that tower over and encapsulate the laneway presents an opportunity within the project to create a surreal and ethereal environment through the use of a series of staggering living gallery walls that offer a multitude of varying informal canvases in the form of the existing window shutters, doorways and service penetrations that are scattered along the adjacent buildings. With an open and flexible floor plan, heritage elements spill from the building into





## THE ROOF

Drawing inspiration from the layout of the city the roof space represents an opportunity to create a space that is both flexible in programmatic function and usability throughout the year while catering to a wide-ranging variety of user groups without detracting from the overall character and heritage aesthetic of the building.

Capitalising on the views afforded by the prominent and centralised location of the building in downtown Yangon, the proposal aims to divide the project

into two key spaces. Flowing gardens, viewing platforms and public activity areas that encourage local favourites such as film and artistic engagement compliment a bar and restaurant space to provide a vehicle that facilitates and nurtures user interaction, both local and tourist, with some of Yangon's most important monuments.

Combining heritage aesthetic and contemporary function the roof space provides an integral element to the overall concept for the building successfully



# THE TERRACES

*Cassidy Baas, Julia Comer, Lara Rann, Siubhan Rudge*



This project is a series of multi-functional terraces that operate on a macro-micro scale to accommodate for tourists and locals alike. The modular system focuses on two main areas, the front of the tourism centre and the back alley, seeking to make both of these spaces more comfortable to occupy while maintaining downtown Yangon's vibrancy and playfulness. The nature of the terracing arrangement allows similar approaches to be applied at multiple scales, creating a connection between the formality of the facade that faces onto Sule Pagoda road, and the more unconstrained back laneways that line this city centre area. This

proposal has the aim of appealing to multiple audiences, creating a public space that can be used year-round while also being sensitive to the unique characteristics of the city. For tourists, it works to promote movement away from the landmark regions surrounding the Sule Pagoda, and into the smaller backstreets that are lined with fascinating aspects of Burmese culture and city life. For locals, it is a place of gathering, circulation and occupation, being accommodating at many levels and allowing for the users themselves to inform the space.

The restored colonial building on the right smiles down upon the vibrant terraces to the left. The





SULE PAGODA ROAD VISUALISATION



FACING THE SULE PAGODA VISUALISATION

spaces are bustling with intermingling locals and tourists. Coloured tiles edging the terraces match the plastic chairs and local clothes that have adorned the landscaped front of this old colonial building. The tourist season comes and goes but the space remains full. When the tourists leave, everyday local use unfolds over these terraces and then folds back up again next year as the cycle continues. Shading structures of transparent screens in tints of pink and white create shadows that protect the public from the elements and paint vibrant hues on their faces.

The park space acts as an extension to the Maha

Bandula park across the road, which can be seen through the screening vegetation that borders it. A place that is filled with locals and tourists alike, the park is somewhere to reconnect with open space in such a busy, vibrant region.

The planning works to encourage movement from the main passageways of the city centre into the backstreets that are less frequented. Using the proposed tourism cultural centre to achieve this, the open park-like space expands out into an exciting, informal terraced landscape at the rear of the building.

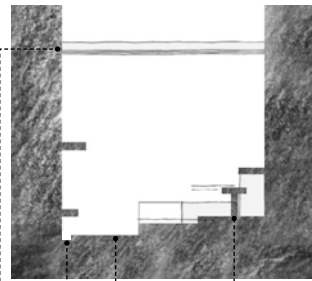
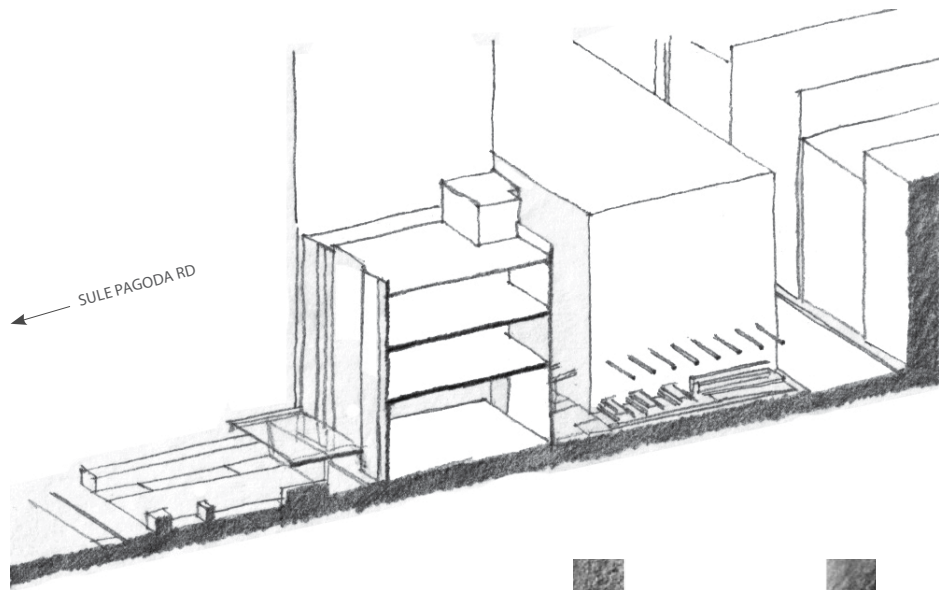


The raised and lowered floor treatment creates an experience of private spaces, linking zones and walkways while also addressing practical aspects such as drainage and residential access. Screening devices and vegetation create a framework upon which can be customised over time by locals, tourists and residents. The laneway running out onto 32nd street encourages gathering, providing the infrastructure for street stalls, markets and other retail opportunities for locals.

This space invites an experience of relaxation and community while also encouraging interaction between small groups, achieved through planning.

The coolness of the surrounding buildings is a welcome contrast to the intense heat of the wide, sunbathed streets. A tea shop, resting upon a raised bamboo terrace is nestled against the entry wall, with customers sipping sweet Myanmar tea. Beams extend between the walls of the buildings above, and hold the transparent pink plastic that bathes the teahouse in rosy light, keeping the customers dry in the rainy season.

Fold down shelves clutter the wall to the left becoming benches for the passers-by, tables for a drink to sit as busy hands rummage in a bag seeking the ringing phone, or exhibition spaces for local



VEGETATION & LIGHTING FRAME - Bamboo Beams

DRAINAGE INDENT - To accommodate lower levels of drainage requirements throughout the year

MAIN THOROUGHFARE - Lower levelling allows for passage for water during wet season

UPPER TERRACE - Raised thoroughfare for access to rear of building and laneway spaces during flooding

crafts that occur here in the tourism building at the end of the laneway.

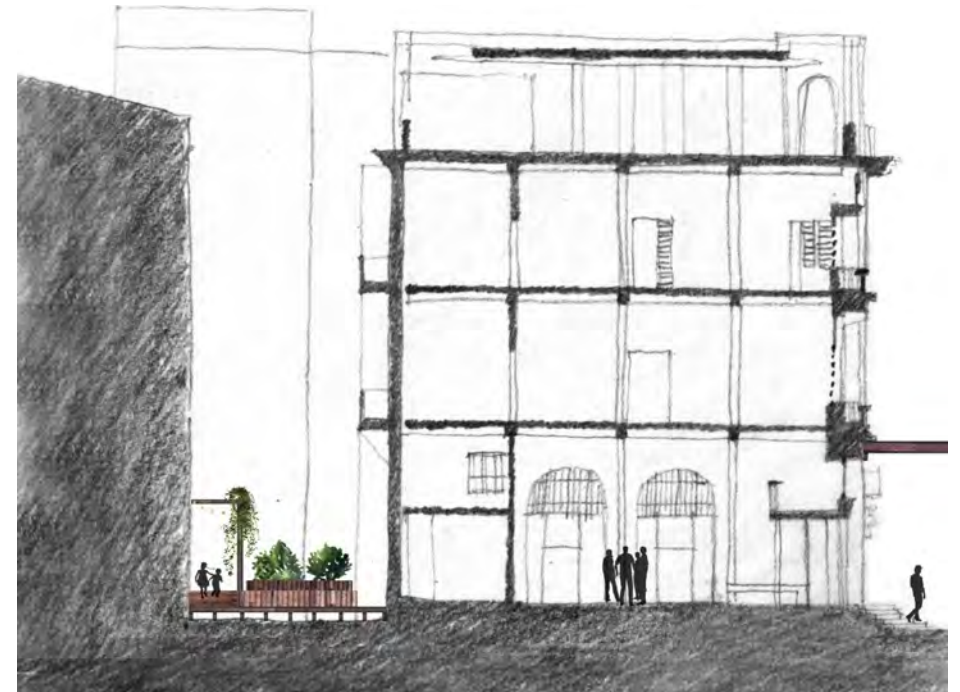
The alleyway undulates with small-scale terraces that provide resting places people to have a break from the bustling city. The staff, the locals and the tourists can all come here to relax. Lush greenery decorates this area, gently swaying with the occasional passing breeze.

The chosen materials are light enough to be inserted seamlessly into these small openings within the city fabric, yet sturdy enough to accommodate use over long periods of time. The use of bamboo decking is

suitable to the climate, allowing for easy drainage during the wet season. Structures such as these can be easily added to, subtracted from and provide surfaces that will not inhibit air flow and breezes.

Working in conjunction with this, the tiled surfaces inserted at points of interest inject colour into the space, establishing a link between the diverse back streets of the city.

Long timber seating and bar surfaces reach out from the wall, decorating the bare walls of the alleyway, taking care to tread lightly on the existing structures of this space, aware of the importance of enhancing



SULE PAGODA RD →

them as they are, rather than working to conceal them.

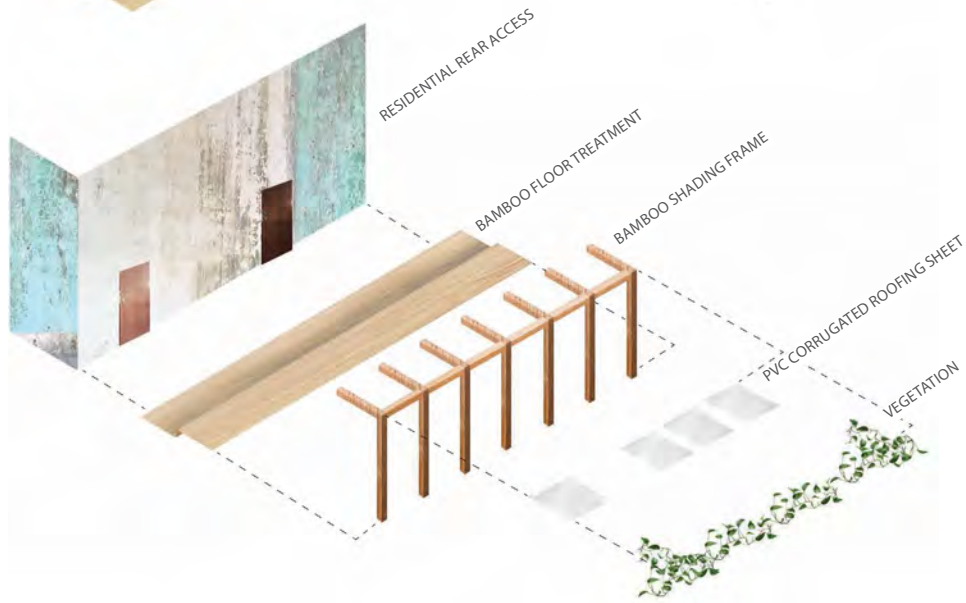
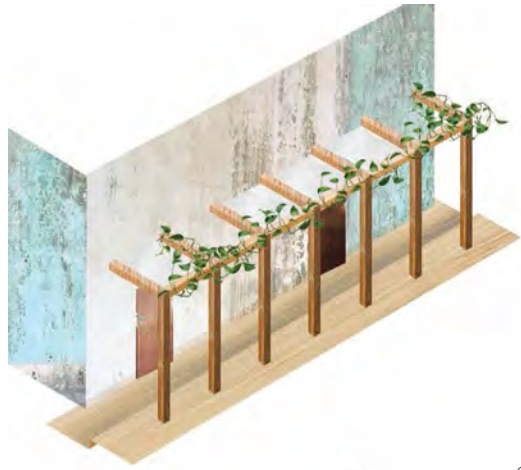
The back alley is designed in such a way that it also allows for the easy circulation of those that use the area for access to homes, shops and other businesses. Taking care to maintain a sense of privacy and seclusion from the larger social spaces, bamboo shading frames are erected that create a screening element while also a structure to which vegetation, crafts, lighting and shading materials can be attached to. The intention here was to apply the same approach used throughout the rest of the project at various scales. Upon this, the space can

be customised, modified and built upon to suit the changing needs of users over time and throughout the year. In this case, when these modifications are applied the result is practical as well: providing an acoustic and visual barrier for residents.

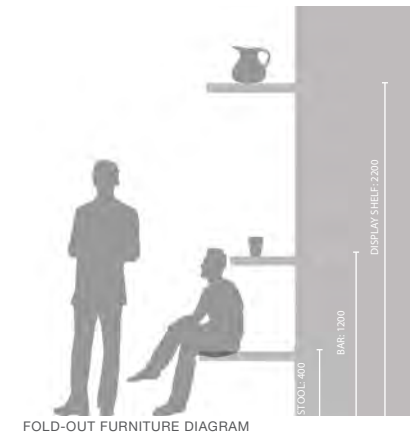
The laneway running perpendicular to 32nd street also has a similar methodology applied: simple unfoldable timber slabs are attached to the walls at a series of heights for different intended uses.

Here, we are considering the multiple levels at which the space will be used and observed from. Those at stool level provide a waiting place; those at bar level





BACK LANEWAY VISUALISATION

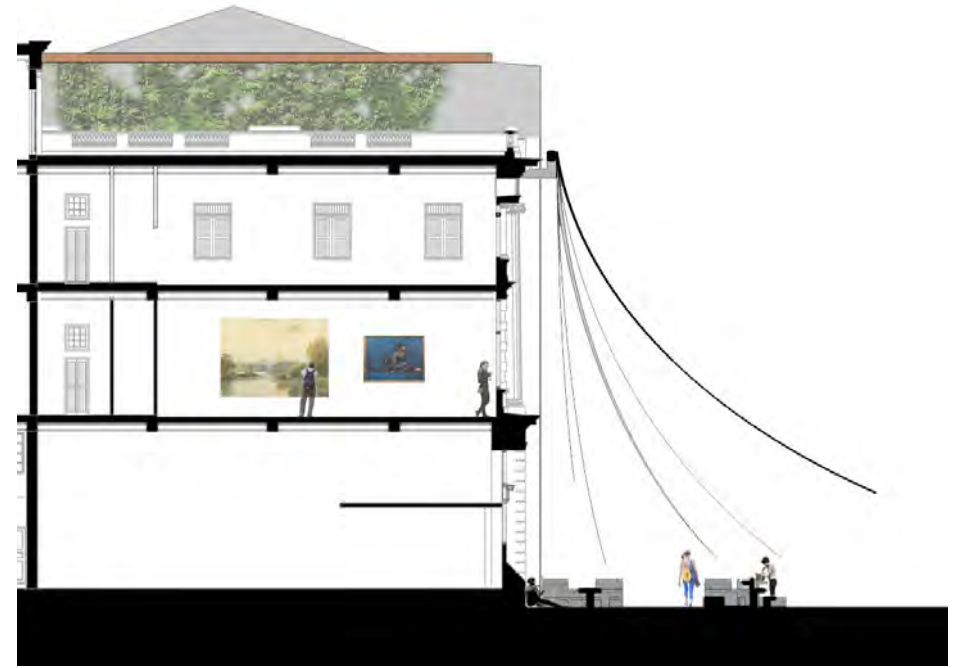


FOLD-OUT FURNITURE DIAGRAM

provide an unfoldable table that can be used standing by a few people at once. Those above these are display platforms, which are at a level at which they can be observed from the back terraces, inside the building and from the rooftop, however not from the passageway itself. These elements are intended to be used in intervals, where they can be folded away to allow for a wider passage of access through this main thoroughfare.

During the wet season, this area is designed in such

a way that allows for users to access the back via the upper decked area if the lower area experiences flooding, enabling the back terraces to be used relatively easily despite this.



# URBAN FABRIC

*Malakai Smith, Thomas Brown*

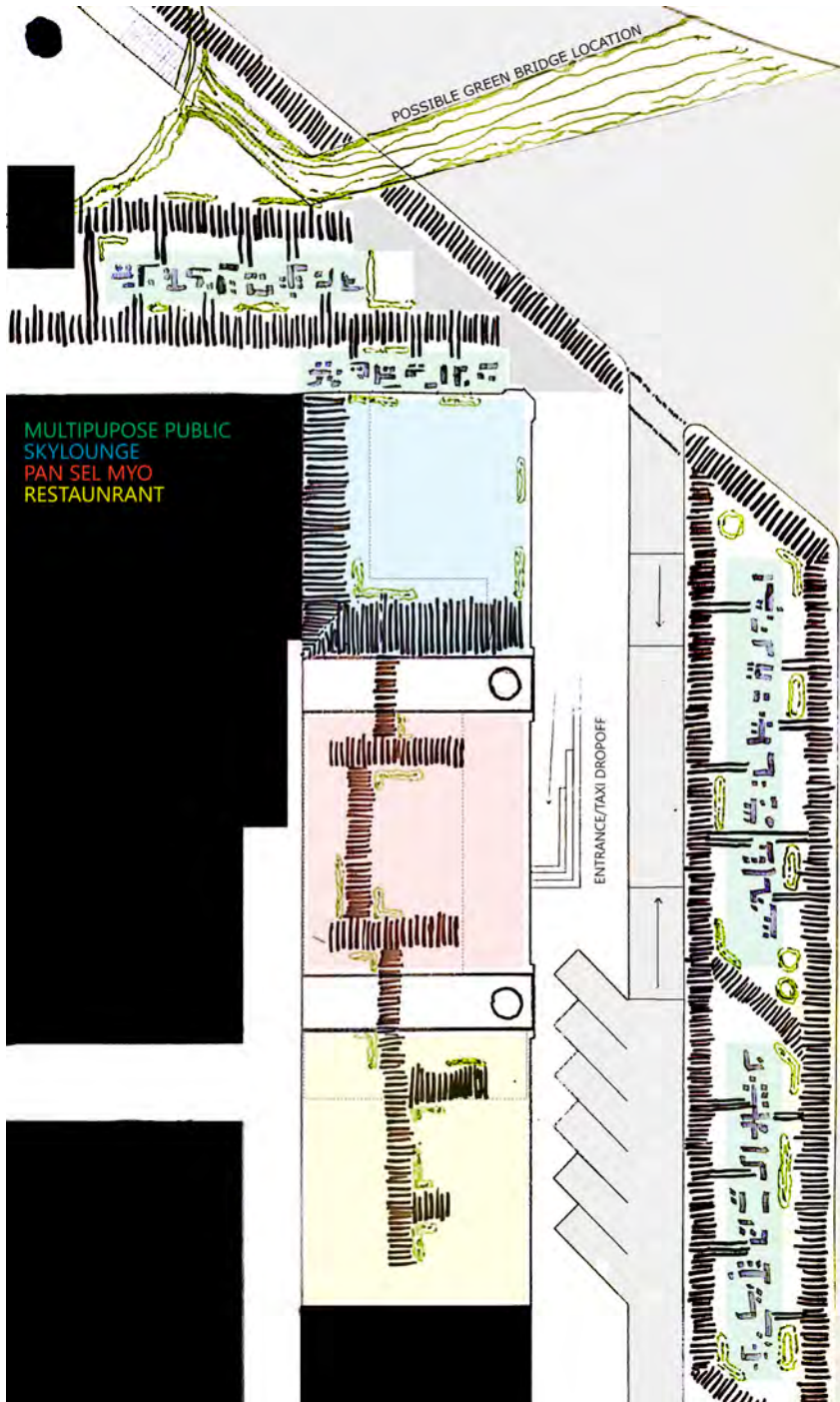
It was always important to us that the architecture of whatever solution we developed didn't overshadow the city's own identity. To this end, our ideas are drawn from broad concepts that overarch the entire urban and suburban fabrics.

These concepts are implemented to form a metaphorical picture frame that showcases Yangon's personality rather than being a reinterpreted subject of that same identity. Working with the rooftop, frontage and corner to the Sule Pagoda, our design

strategy follows simple and achievable gestures that require input from citizens to come to their full fruition.

The frontage and side corner have been treated with adaptable concrete installations that can meet the functional requirements of many scenarios seen around the city. They are designed to facilitate games of Kyway En, paan and food vendors, newspaper displays and use as general resting areas. To make space for this, a lot of the carpark





adjacent to the eastern and northern façades have been reclaimed as footpath, though a minimal amount of parks have been left for those who would be employed in the building as this is a reality of the city.

The shading banners hanging down the northern façade are operable and flexible, requiring only simple bamboo framing to hold it wherever it is needed. The colours chosen reflect and celebrate the broad and vibrant palette found all across the city and the translucency of the fabric creates and washing quality of light in the spaces below. These colours are continued on the fabric canopy that shades the roof spaces. Here, the undulating fabric hangs under a simply formed frame continues the entablature.

The form of the building splits the roof into three distinct parts. We thought it fitting to bring three

different functions into close proximity in the manner that the city does all the time on any of her streets. Our Myanmar collaborators informed us that open air dining and entertainment venues are in high demand around Yangon and would be appreciated by both travellers and locals, so the concept for separate restaurant, lounge and exhibition/performance spaces emerged, all of which capitalise on breezes and immersive views of the immediate context.

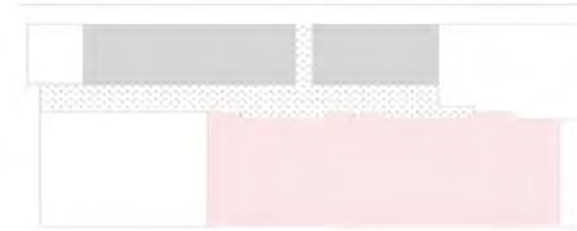
The exhibition/performance area is designed as a space to showcase the 'pan sel myo', or ten flowers - distinctive Myanmar arts and crafts which will provide the opportunity for a small fair-trade merit based economy whereby workshops practicing sustainably can earn a desirable location to do business. It will also serve to expose travellers to artistic practices to look out for that they would have been unaware of, for an artistically enriched stay in the city.



# MODULAR MARKET

—  
*Billy McQueenie, Isabella Reynolds,*

*Acacia Stevenson, Lachlan Sweet, Matthew Walton*



AN ISOLATED BACK ALLEY, WITH ONE GATED ENTRANCE FROM THE STREET



INTRODUCING ACCESS POINTS THROUGH INDIVIDUALLY OWNED BLOCKS, CONNECTING THE STREET WITH THE ALLEY AND THE TOURISM BUILDING



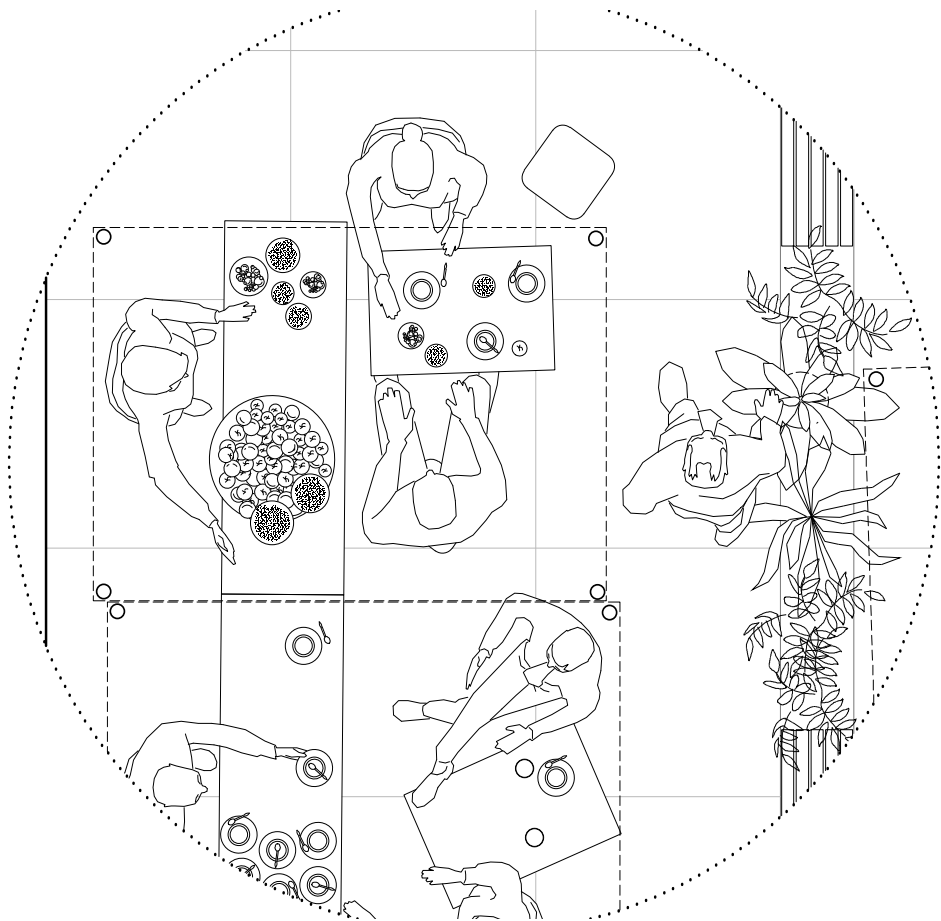
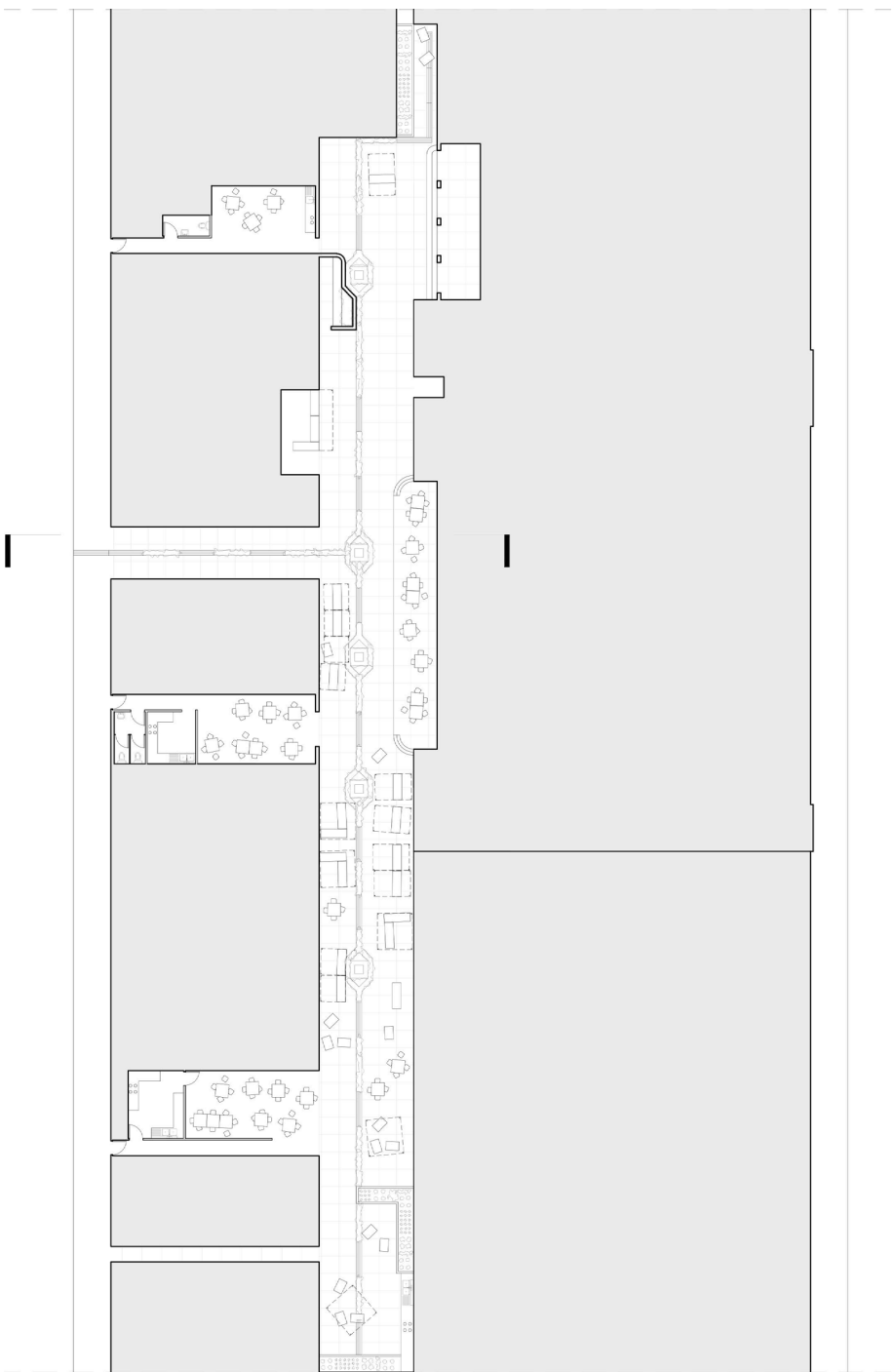
OPPORTUNITY TO OCCUPY INDIVIDUALLY OWNED BLOCKS AS SHOP-HOUSES OR VENDOR STATIONS, ACTIVATING THE SPACES BETWEEN THE ALLEY AND THE STREET

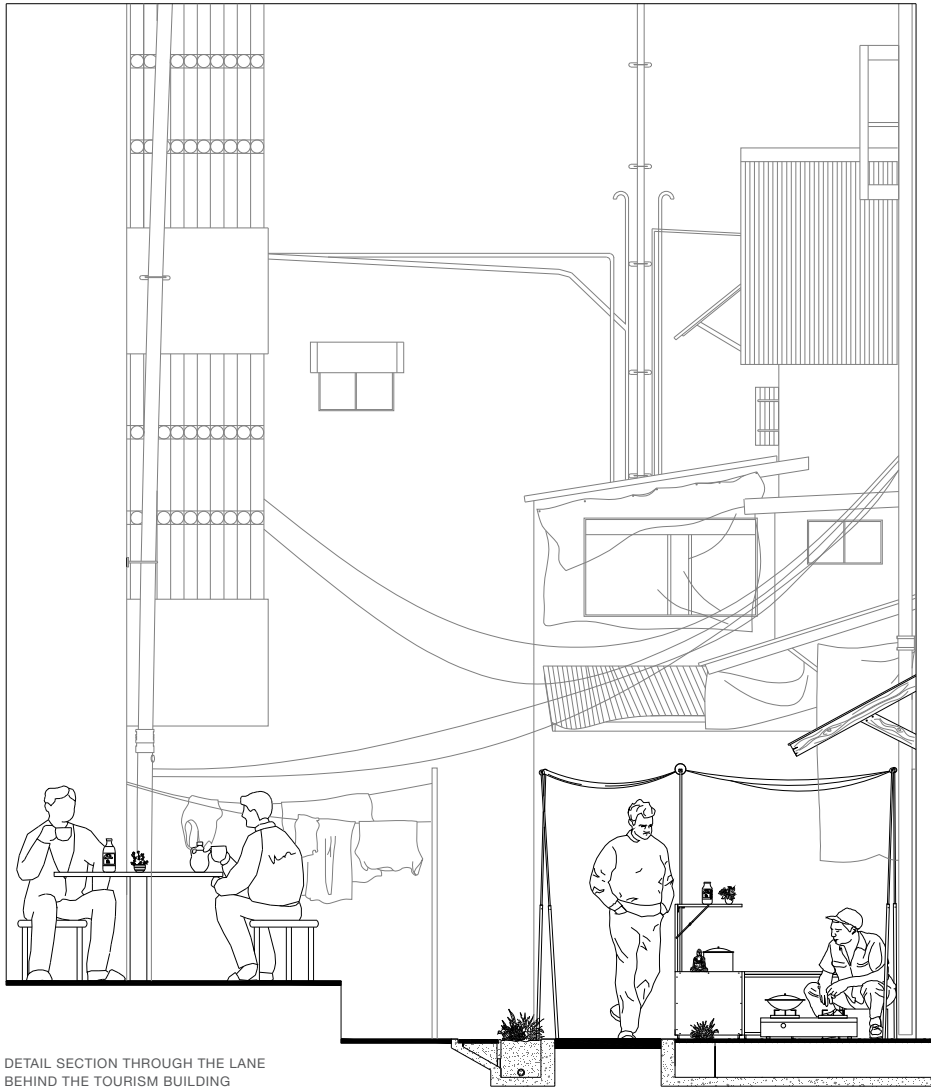
As a team of five, we first approached the task with mind to the history of the heritage building, and to our position as enthusiastic but ultimately naïve foreigners. Upon visiting the site of what was the Burmese Favourite Co., the need for invigoration in both servicing and in accessibility was apparent to all of us. Several hundred photographs and many scrawled drawings later we decided on a proposal that would aim to make the currently neglected lane behind the building accessible and usable for the surrounding community as well as visitors to the building.

The laneway proposal features a modular system,

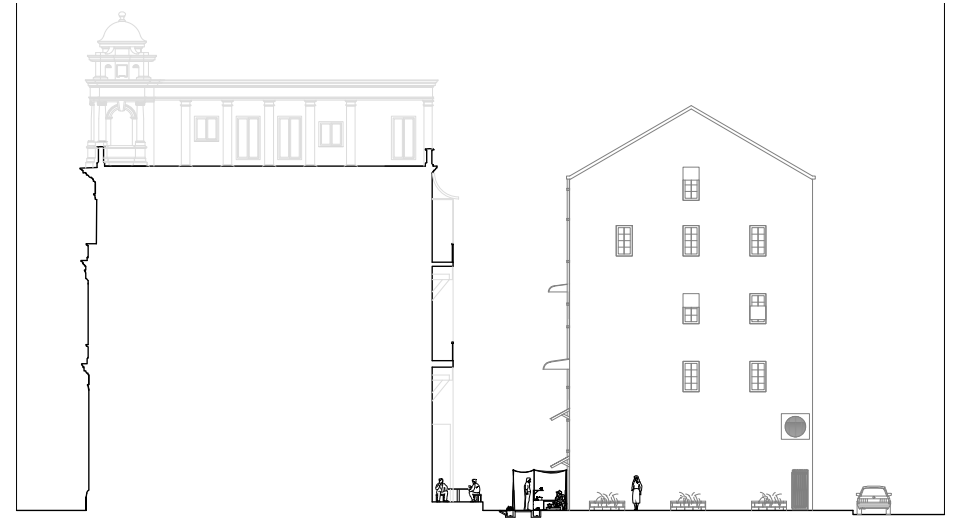
which would allow residents to turn the parts of the laneway which are currently domestic extensions into a more public space and an opportunity for business by using it as a market-stall for food, clothing and other goods. These modules can be moved and adapted as the space changes over time. Adjunct to this scheme are other proposals; the levelling of the terrain to make for equitable access, the inclusion of a community garden to foster user-commitment and engagement, an eating area and an open space to be used for sports and games.







DETAIL SECTION THROUGH THE LANE  
BEHIND THE TOURISM BUILDING

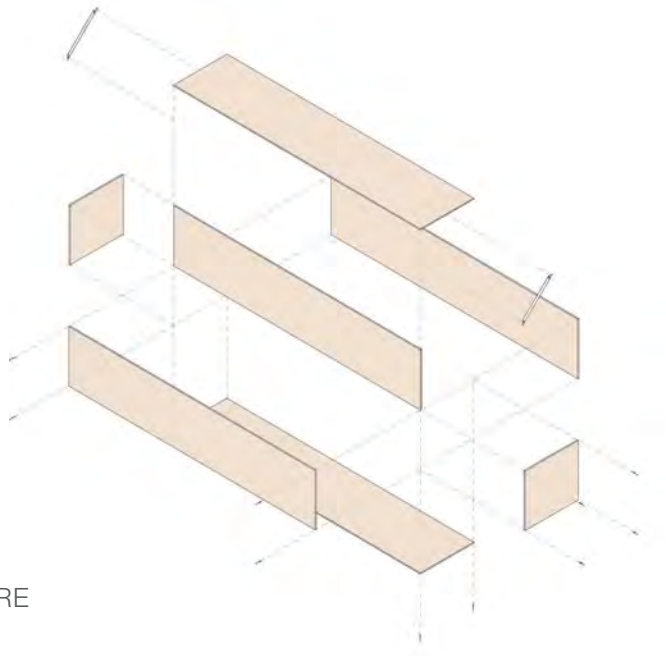


SECTION THROUGH THE TOURISM  
BUILDING AND LANEWAY



GREEN DRAINAGE SYSTEM

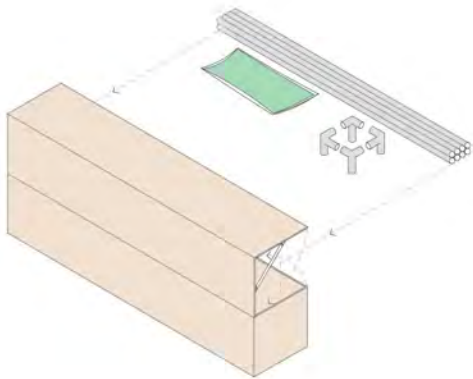




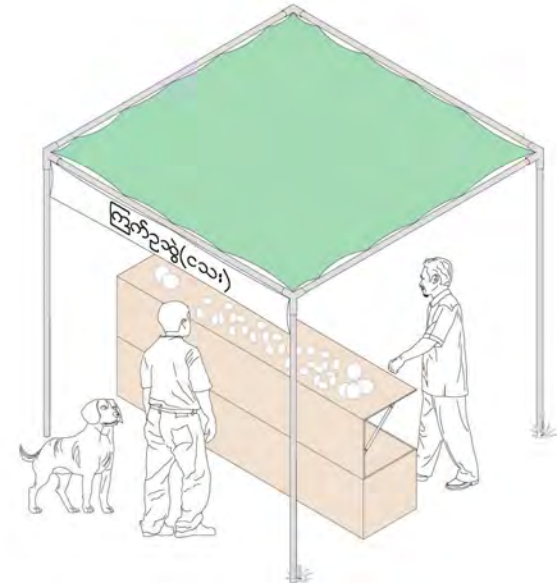
MANUFACTURE



ASSEMBLY  
ASSEMBLY



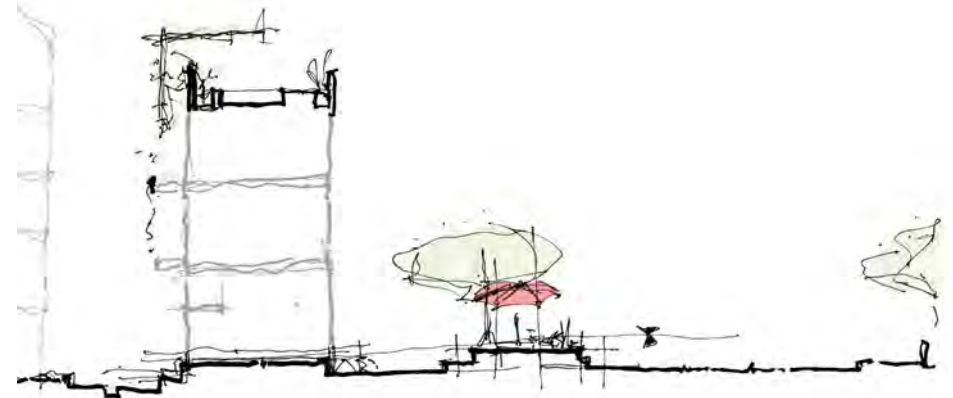
STORAGE



OCCUPATION  
OCCUPATION







# INTERSTITIAL SPACE



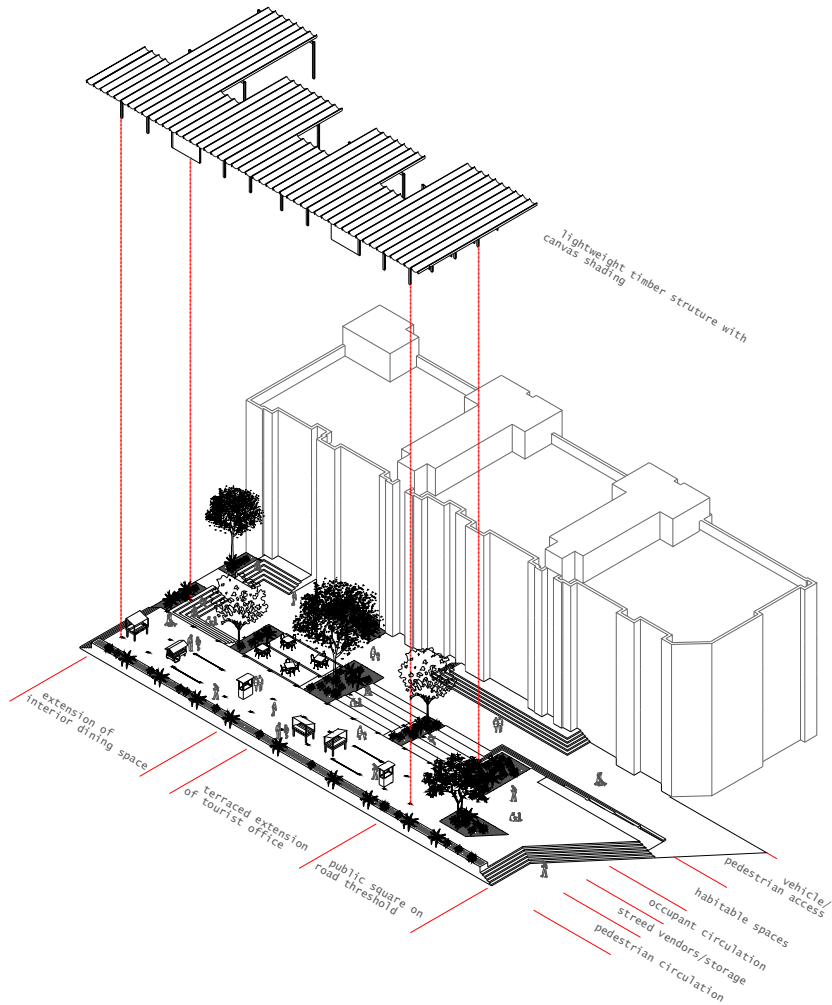
*Kristian Meredith, Nyoah Rosmarin, Angelica Roache-Wilson  
Mackenzie Barclay & Stephen Saines*

Establishing a the parti as group prior to addressing the individual design challenges that where revealed within each area, was key to providing a unified outcome.

The parti seeks to establish a relationship between the proposed tourism centre, the city and the individual subject sites. A comparison is made between the plinth that forms the base of the colonial building and the deep kerb that has been founded throughout Yangon, and how this edge may

be occupied during different times of the day and evening.

The plinth as a consistent element is applied within each individual design response as an organising device, arranging the programme and connecting the individual elements so that they may be read as a comprehensive response that anchors the site back into the city fabric.



# STREETSCAPE

*Mackenzie Barclay & Stephen Saines*



The current site condition, along with many streets in Yangon prioritises cars and parking and little space is provided for public amenity and street vendors.

The colonial site condition along with the Bank street condition provide examples where pedestrian space is valued over vehicles and the pavement plinth and treelined streetscape provide a In our design the raised plinth becomes a barrier from the road, and creates a space for vendors to legally occupy and for public gathering. Trees and vegetation are reinstated into the streetscape for shade and amenity. A light timber shade structure has its own language which does not compete with the colonial building's classical facade.



Street Condition | Current Yangon



Street Condition | Bank St



Site Condition | Current



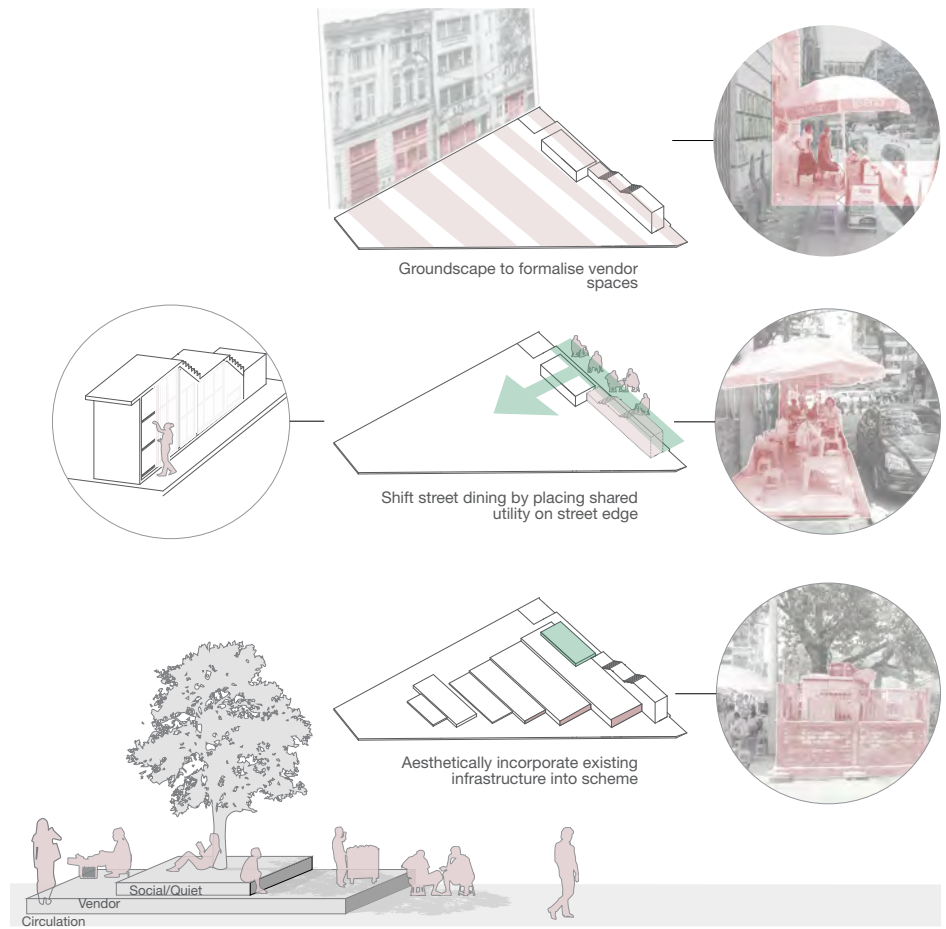
Site Condition | Colonial





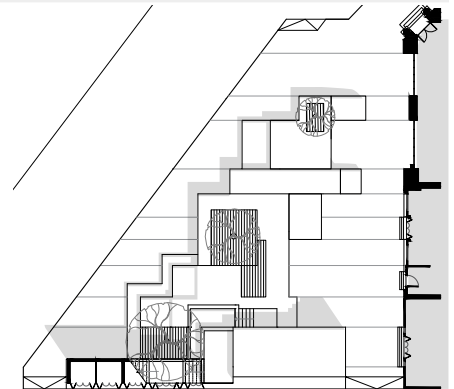
# CORNER PLINTH

—  
*Angelica Roache-Wilson*



I observed this site housing a diversity of functions, changing throughout the day, from vendors and street dining to people quietly reading the paper or playing ball games in the evening. My response to this site is aimed at maintaining the diversity of occupation and improving functionality while providing a loose framework for occupation.

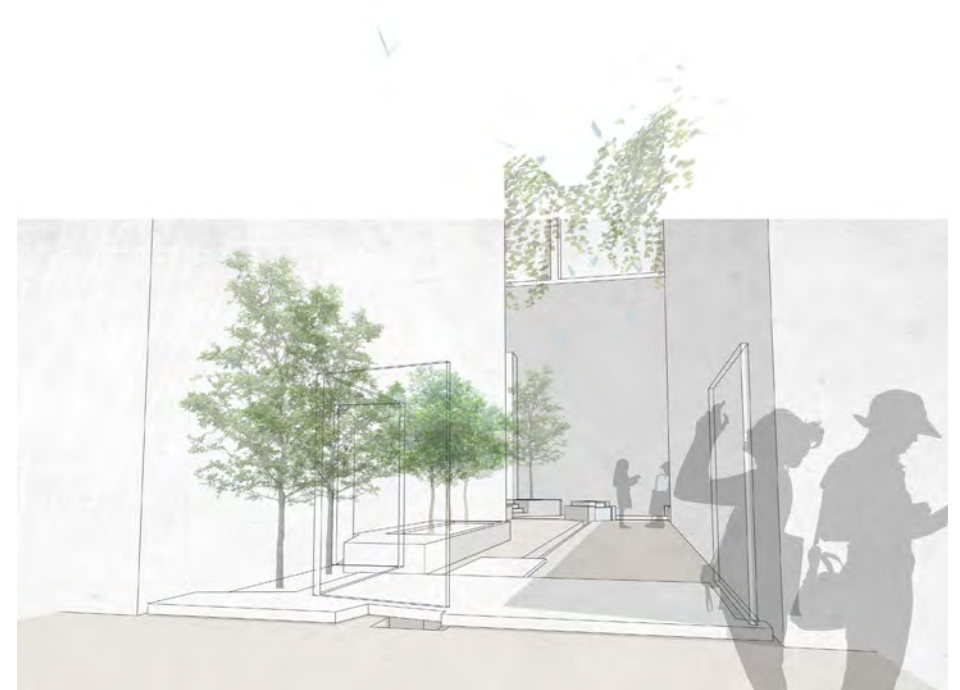
Habitable steps respond to various conditions of the site to create vertical separation while ground treatments respond to the building facade to formalise existing vendor spaces and visually disrupt moment through the space to reduce the feeling of being a traffic island.





# INTERSTITIAL SPACE

*Kristian Meredith*



The laneway is reinterpreted as a functional space that gives back to the immediate community, current and future. Through the removal of ambiguity within the existing programme, an ownership is manifested in the local inhabitants and the lane is reestablished as the spine of the surrounding buildings.

The plinth provides a formal arrangement of space and programme, housing vertical pedestrian circulation, soft landscaping planters and elevate the programme above any flooding caused by local weather conditions, while also implying spatial allocations between the owned and un-owned.

The arbour is then inserted above the lane allowing the roof space connection to the laneway volume. This vegetated arbour provides an evolving living screen between the public realm of the tourism centre and the private dwellings of the existing adjacent building.

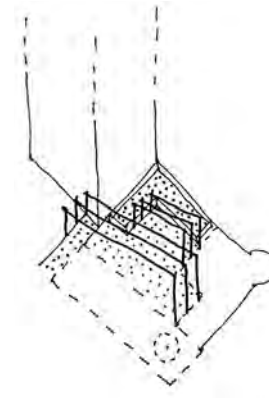
To allow sustainable growth within the adjoining community the flora that is grown within the laneway and on the arbour is such that it encourages a habitat that supports the harvest of butterfly pupae. It is proposed that these are then sold nationally and internationally for use in exhibitions and functions.



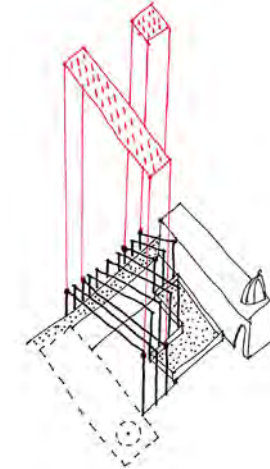


# ROOF SHADE

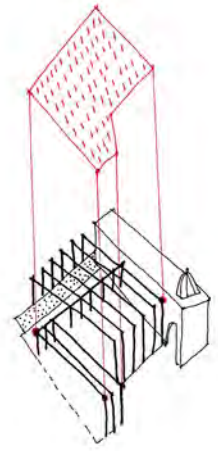
—  
*Nyoah Rosmarin*



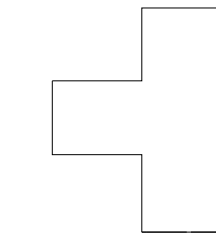
viewing platform roof  
frame + shade cloth



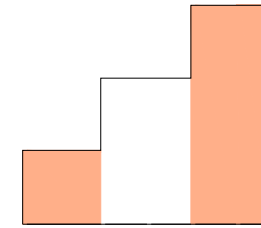
vegetable garden roof  
frame + shade cloth



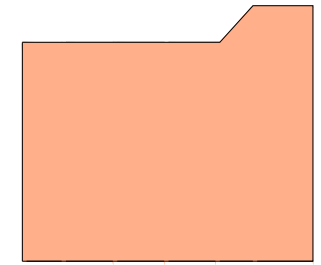
restaurant roof  
frame + shade cloth



total exposure | viewing



partial exposure | garden



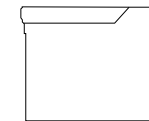
no exposure | restaurant

Following the schematic plans acquired from Turquoise Mountain, the roof of the tourism building was divided into three sections:

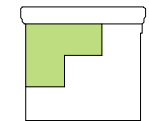
- restaurant/dining area
- garden area
- viewing platform area

The geometry applied permits different variations of shading which transitions from total cover in the restaurant section to almost complete exposure on the viewing platform. This creates an inverse relationship with 'green' spaces which vary from grassed areas to vegetable boxes.

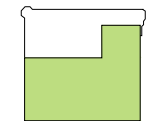
The structure is created by extending the arbour from the back of the building. This approach allows for minimal intervention on the current heritage street facade. It also permits for a balcony garden that runs the back length of the roof.



no green space  
restaurant



partial green space  
garden



almost total green space  
viewing

# AFTERWORD

And all of a sudden it was time to bid this land and its people farewell. Just as words could not describe what to expect when we first arrived, these words will never truly convey the worthy experience we have taken with us, or the ideas and perspective we all hoped to impart to the international colleagues we now know as friends.

Though a world apart, we will strive forth together, toward the architecture we have developed over the past weeks. Toward a doctrine of design that embraces nuanced forms of use, embraces each place's unique historical tapestry and perhaps most importantly, embraces its people wholeheartedly and without discrimination, and does all this without making egoic judgements or gestures upon the nature of the place.

We hope that others will discover what we in turn discovered during our time in Myanmar and we hope this will further the cross pollination of ideas between cultures across the world. Opportunities like these are far too important to pass up on our rapidly globalising planet.

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*Thomas Brown*

UQ Architecture 2017

