

Three Modes Of Witnessing

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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For my parents and Zoe.

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Abstract

This thesis is an accumulation of probing exercises about how vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy, if combined, can develop a grammar for witnessing a particular cultural landscape, conveying insights and reflections that facts alone cannot. Tested through the Acadian heritage, with a focus on their expulsion history, it explores the vulnerability of faith, the fertility of the land, and the stability of the spirit. These three explorations resulted into Three Modes of Witnessing: the *Sinking Chapel*, the *Walled Garden*, and the *Gumbo House*. The first two are situated at Horton Landing, Nova Scotia, and the third is at Bayou Teche, Louisiana.

While the interventions are inseparable from the Acadian heritage, they offer a small opening for reading other places. It provokes a dialogue that regardless of our fundamental human differences, we all navigate and witness a similar human condition in which varying degrees of faith, overcoming, and peace coexist.

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From my sister, empathy.

From my Father, that passion can be translated into discipline and work ethic.

From my Mother, the unwavering support and the application of kindness.

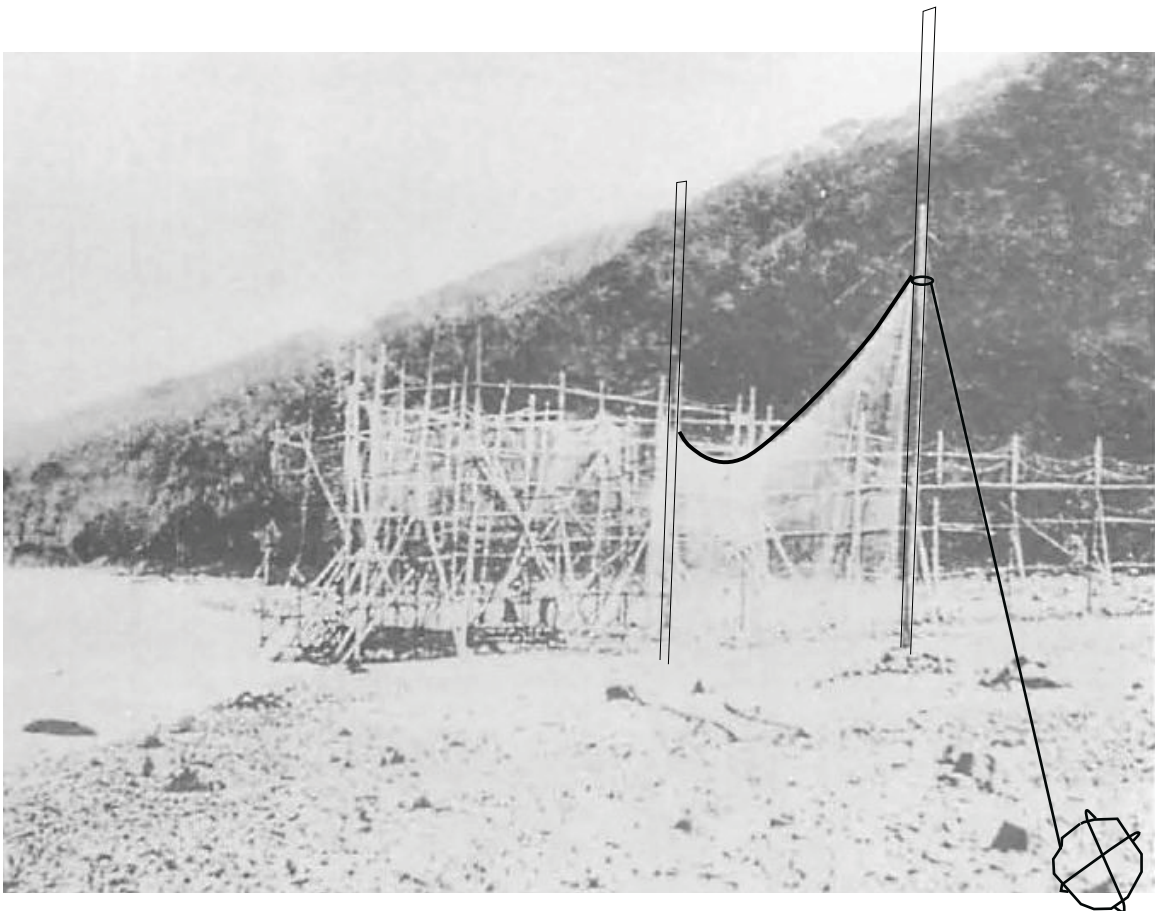
From the love of my life, my bestfriend, Zoe, the unmeasurable love and patience. Your sacrifice in the past year will never go unnoticed. I am excited for our next chapters.

Above all, from the imperceptible, boundless, formless, religionless, that is God, the guidance. Acting as if you exist made me a better man, friend, partner, brother and son.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Witnessing

There is a factual definition of *witnessing*. This thesis is not about that. There is a forensic definition of *witnessing*. This thesis is not about that, too. This thesis defines *witnessing* as experiencing the essence of something, in the flesh, prior to any historical, intellectual and political interpretation. This way meaning is more accessible to common people. It provides a common ground where meaning can occur, creating an intersubjective perception that we share more similarities than we realize. *Witnessing*, in this sense, is to



This is a vernacular fishing weir near Blomidon at Minas Basin, similar area where this thesis is tested. The vernacular grammar here is roundwood posts staked and anchored on the ocean floor, structural redundancy, tension ropes, and spontaneous cross-bracing (base image from Gordon 1993, 47).



Testing the *grammar* derived from vernacular architecture and stoicism to depict the two sides of faith: suffering (suspended wrecking ball) and the promise of stillness (stair and kneeler beyond).



Sketch attempting to extract and witness the atmosphere that resides within.

understand something existentially — to feel the spirit of a particular place or situation by virtue of the movement of our body in space. It is through this direct engagement with the world that we gain a gut feeling about an otherwise complicated event.

More than anything, *witnessing* values common sense. It gives confidence to our ability to discern and distill complex scenarios into its essential components. This suggests that we do not need to be experts in perceiving whether something suspended is heavy or light. All we need is our instinct and intuition. When we *witness*, therefore, we become attuned to the subtle rhythms of our environment. The whispers of the wind, the scent of the sea, and the flickering of light and shadow all shape our understanding of what is. Our bodies, along with our senses, in turn, become the locus for perception.

For example, a live encounter of an old fish shack evokes a sense of memory and meaning. We do not just see its evident deterioration; we feel the stories it holds. Beyond the physical decay, there is an intangible presence lingering — the echoes of laughter and the human interactions shared within its walls. In that moment of observation, we rely less on facts, but more on our commonsensical knowledge. In turn, we become more than spectators; we become participants in the unfolding drama of time, intimately connected to the stories of those who came before us. Put simply, *witnessing* is a first-hand experience of the present to help us gain a deeper understanding of the past.



Weathered fishing shack in South Shore Nova Scotia.

Vernacular

This thesis defines the vernacular as a grammar through which a particular place expresses itself. In music, for example, the grammar of hip-hop is particularly different from the grammar of classical music. It is not a matter of right or wrong. It is simply a matter of peculiarity. The musical composition and the overall ambience of each genre vary. Similarly, a building in an inter-tidal zone has a different grammar than a building in the mountains.



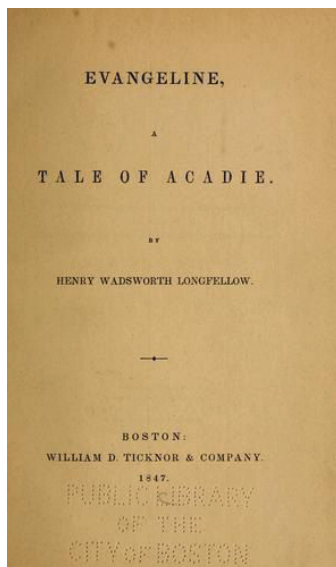
Vernacular fishing weir in Annapolis Basin at high tide (photo from Gordon 1993, 49).

In addition, in his book *Architecture Without Architects*, Bernard Rudofsky claims that vernacular architecture is “the result of rare good sense in the handling of practical problems” (Rudofsky 1964, 3). This suggests that vernacular architecture is a cultural process born from our need to overcome local challenges: a place-based survival mechanism that exhibits “tectonic logic” that is both “practical and poetic” (McCarter, MacKay-Lyons, and Sweetapple 2017, 7-14). Through straightforward building practices, vernacular architecture engages with what the place is, how it operates, and what it could be. It is, therefore, one of the most enduring human creations, as it manifests the essence of a particular place.

Now that we have established the basic definition of what vernacular is, it is important to note how this thesis interacts with it. This thesis is particularly interested in the feeling — the mood or atmosphere — that the vernacular embodies. With this focus, this thesis is less interested in the building technology side of things, and more in the poetic image side of things, similar to that of a poem or a parable: a figurative language that many people can intuitively relate to, prior to any intellectualization. It is for this reason that this thesis operates in the realm of feelings, rather than facts.

Stoicism

There is a universe of stoic teachings and this thesis only focuses on a particular book, namely, the *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, dated approximately 161 to 181 AD. It was his personal diary documenting how he internally wrestled with himself with the guidance stoic philosophy. Each paragraph is like an aphorism: a brief and fundamental statement about the nature of man, and the impermanence



A vernacular myth; fictional account of the Acadian Expulsion; Longfellow's *Evangeline* 1847 (photo from Open Library 1970).

and beauty of life. The book is a crash-course in stoic philosophy, with emphasis on the art of enduring hardship with reason, wisdom, courage and tranquility, focusing on what can be controlled and accepting what cannot. It invites us to have agency over inevitable suffering, especially those that falls outside the realm of our control. Stoicism, in this sense, is the gap between stimuli and response. It is the tranquil space in-between. A space for witnessing what is and a thoughtful pause before any intellectualization to propose what could be. With this flow, we can order our thoughts and feelings accordingly, providing ourselves with a nuanced understanding of the stimuli and what is within our power to either transcend it or simply accept it.

Architecturally speaking, stoicism is a form of *witnessing* before designing. Existentially speaking, stoicism is a form of a prayer. It is a practice that aspires for inner peace by virtue of pragmatic thought and action. Echoing this flow is the stoic concept of stillness: “Tranquility is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind [...] let your principles be brief and fundamental” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 33).

Part of achieving tranquility is accepting that we are all going to die. This is part of the ever-changing nature of the cosmos. However, the acceptance of death in this context is not a pessimistic exercise. It is an acceptance of fate, witnessing life for what it is.

See how everything is forgotten, and look at the chaos of infinite time on each side of [the present], and the emptiness of applause, and the changeableness and want to judgment in those who pretend to give praise, and the narrowness of the space within which it is circumscribed [..] The other is that all these things, which you see, change immediately and will no longer be, and constantly bear in mind how many of these changes you have already witnessed. The universe is transformation; life is opinion [..]

Death is such as generation is, a mystery of nature;

composition out of the same elements, and a decomposition into the same; and altogether not a thing of which any man should be ashamed, or it is not contrary to [the nature of] a reasonable animal, and not contrary to the reason of our constitution. (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 34-36)

Stoicism teaches us not only to acknowledge our eventual mortality as a fundamental part of our human constitution, but also to approach the present moment with a sense of urgency.

Since it is possible that you may depart from life this very moment, regulate every act and thought accordingly. (Aurelius 2020 and Robertson, 18)

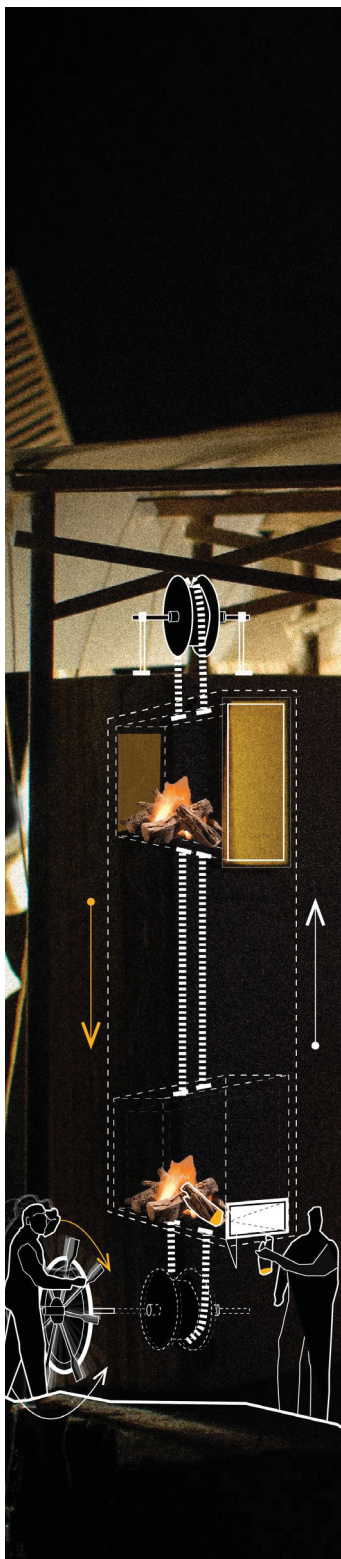
Even if you should live three thousand years, and as many times ten thousand years, still remember that no man loses any other life than this which he now lives, nor lives any other than this which he now loses. The longest and shortest are thereby brought to the same. For the present is the same to all. For the present is the only thing of which a man can be deprived. (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 20)

In addition, stoic philosophy urges us to prioritize communal bonds over trivial concerns of the ego, encouraging a shift in focus toward actions and decisions that may contribute to the greater good.

Do not act as if you were going to live ten thousand years. Death hangs over you. While you live, while it is in your power, be good [...] Someone who has a ferocious desire for posthumous fame does not consider that every one of those who remember him will himself also die very soon. (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 37)

More than anything, stoicism teaches us that our inherent human differences should not serve as a cheap excuse for us to not work together.

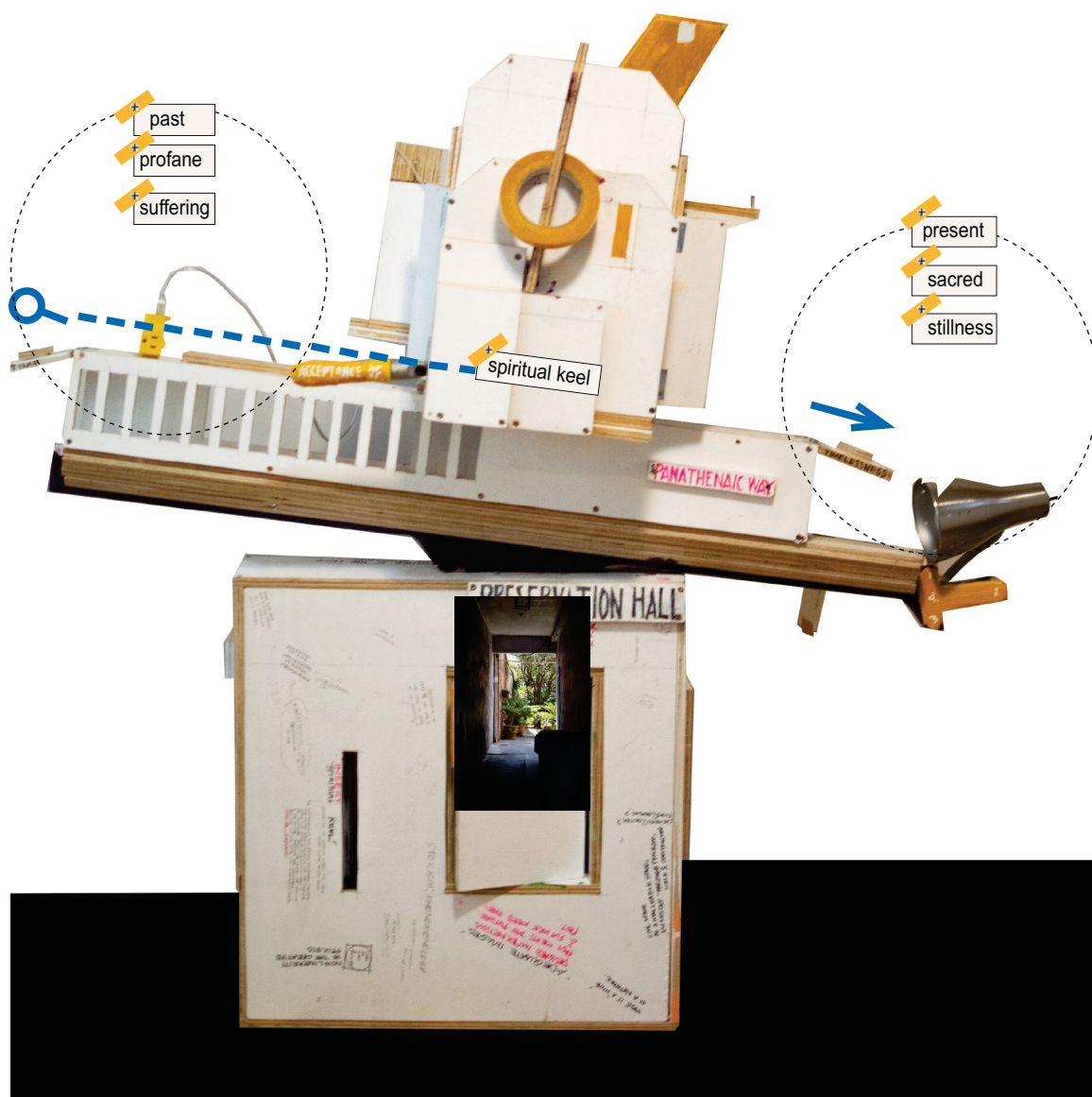
Begin the morning by saying to yourself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them because of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen that the nature of good is beautiful, and that the bad is ugly, and that the nature of he who does wrong is akin to me, not only of the same blood or seed, but that it participates in the same intelligence and the same portion of the divinity, I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him. For



Sketch showing how people from different backgrounds working together to generate and sustain the light.

we are made for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature [...] (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 15)

In short, stoicism can serve as our *spiritual keel* for helping us steer through life's challenges, even death. It is a tool that can help us *witness* a particular situation and simplify it into its essential components so that we can respond accordingly. In essence, it helps us *witness* our shared humanity.



Sketch interpreting stoic philosophy as a “shaft of space”, a framework, enabling energies from contradictory worlds to cross-pollinate while upholding moral stability.



Stoicism is understood to be a *spiritual keel*, a tool, for navigating the waters of the sacred and the profane, the past and the present, and peace and suffering.

Grammar

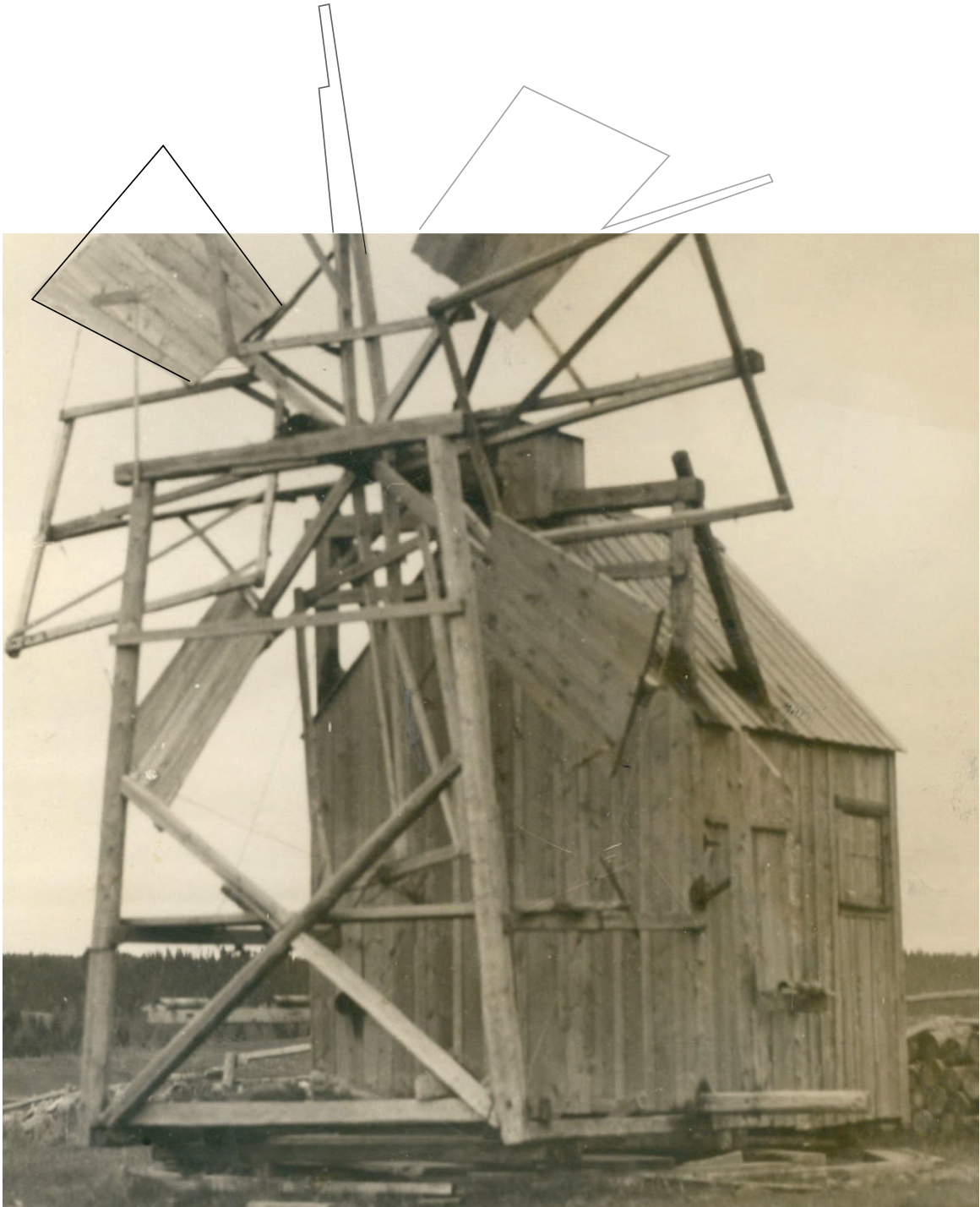
This thesis defines grammar as the marriage of vernacular architecture with stoic philosophy. This grammar employs vernacular architecture for *form-making*, and stoicism for *event-making*. The vernacular not only shapes the appearance and ambiance of our surroundings but also influences our perception and emotional experience. Meanwhile, stoicism offers a framework of rituals, inviting us not only to recognize our shared humanity but also to act in accordance with our best selves. The combination of vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy, in turn, creates environments imbued with a strong sense of place and purpose, fostering a deeper connection between individuals and their surroundings.

Thesis Statement

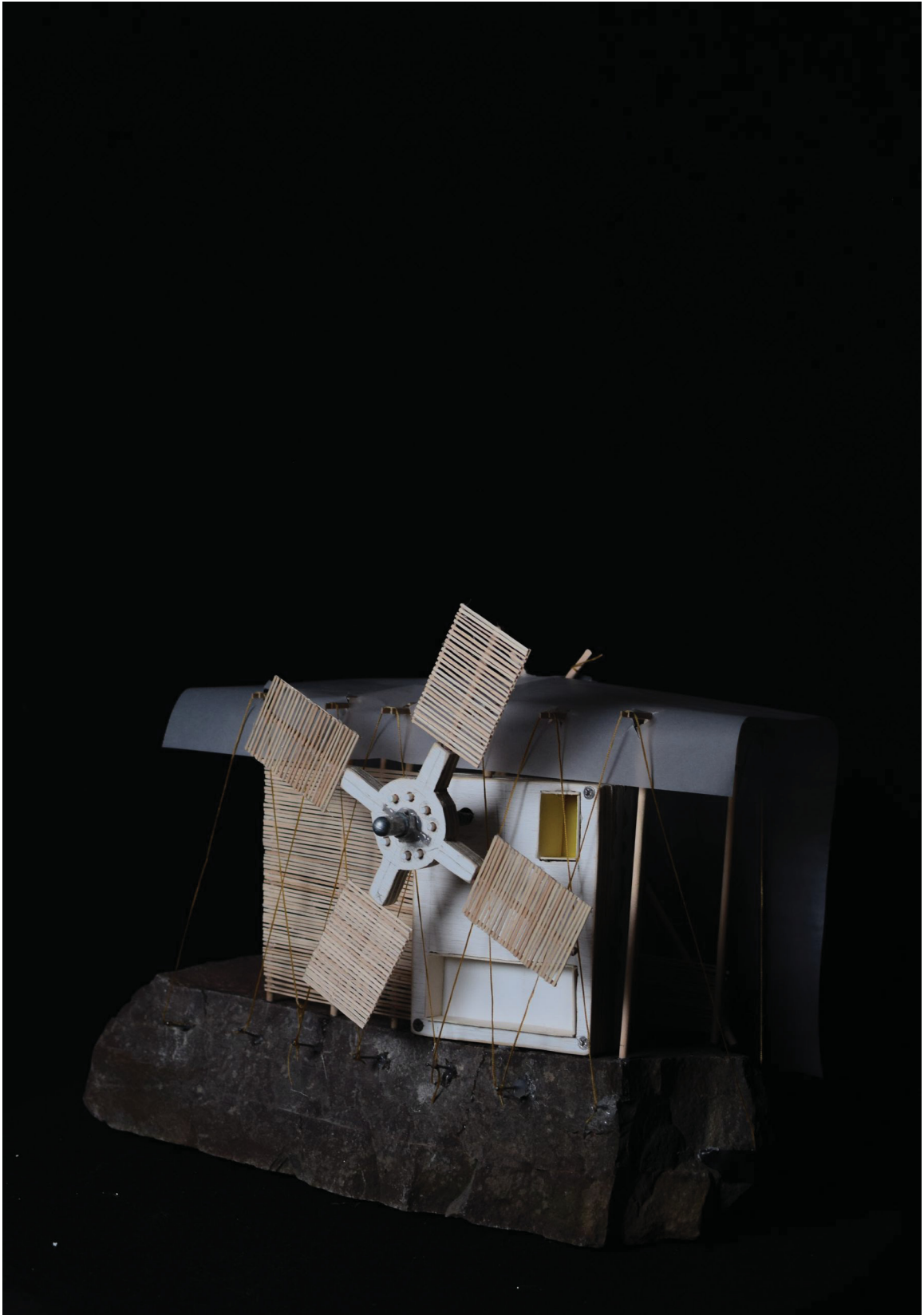
As a grammar in both building and thinking, this thesis argues that vernacular architecture and stoicism speak the same language, with the former emerging from *without* and the latter emerging from *within*: respectively, a reasonable building to a particular place (vernacular), and reasonable response to a particular situation (stoicism). While factual information provides important context, it is the combination of vernacular architecture's tangible expressions of culture and stoicism's philosophical approach to observation that allows for a more nuanced understanding of place.

However, assuming these propositions are true, it will only gain credibility if tested in a particular place and situation. With this, brings us to the thesis question:

How can vernacular architecture and stoicism develop a *grammar for witnessing* a particular cultural landscape, conveying insights and reflections that facts alone cannot?



Probing how this vernacular windmill can be reimagined for storytelling purposes; an old type of windmill use[d] for grinding grain at French Acadian settlement at West Chezzetcook N.S. (base photo from Nova Scotia Archives 1930).



Model study: a *grammar* derived from the vernacular windmill to *witness* the essence of faith.



Testing and turning *grammar* into a feeling, a poetic image: an atmosphere.

Chapter 2: Situating (Literature Review)

The Acadians

There is a factual and political re-telling of the Acadian cultural landscape, describing it from end to end, involving ethically complex legacies that can be argued as part of the ever-changing landscape of colonial history. This thesis is not about that, as it cannot and will not be able to paint the full picture of any cultural landscape. This thesis explores the Acadian heritage solely for the purpose of testing whether the *grammar* derived from vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy, if combined, can effectively convey particular perspectives that facts alone cannot. The Acadian expulsion story, therefore, set the stage for a speculative architectural thesis storying faith, overcoming and peace:



Acadian Expulsion of 1755 by F.O.C. Darley, from an edition of Longfellow's *Evangeline* 1867 (photo from Canada: Cultures and Colonialism to 1800, 2011)

three fundamental aspects of the human experience that manifest in various forms and scales within each of us.

The Expulsion

The expulsion of the Acadians in 1755 by the British displaced some “17,000 people at a cost of an estimated 10,000 lives” (Faragher 2018). In his book *The Great and Noble Scheme: the tragic story of the expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland*, Dr. John Faragher outlines the methodical planning of the British empire to strategically remove the Acadian people from their homeland and to relocate them to different parts of English colonies:

The council’s intention was to fracture the community of the Acadians and destroy their identity as a distinct people. The operation to remove the Acadians would cost thousands of lives and years of suffering and wandering, and must be marked down as one of the most horrific episodes in North American history. (Faragher 2005, 336)

As Faragher notes, this displacement was of significant magnitude, and happened against an already layered history of settler-colonialism:

The expulsion of the Acadians was the first episode of state sponsored ethnic cleansing in North American history. But let’s be clear, the colonization of North America, by Spain, France, England, Holland, Russia and other European powers was accompanied by countless episodes of horrific violence against native people affecting tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of individuals. But the acadian removal in 1755, 20 years before the American revolution, was the first recorded instance of state actors that is civil and military officials in North America, planning and carrying out the kind of complicated logistical operation required to forcibly remove and relocate thousands of people. To lay waste to their homeland and to sponsor the recolonization of the land by settlers of their own kind. (Faragher 2018)

The suffering caused by being exiled from their home is one thing, but the ways in which they were transported is another. “The children, women, and men of Grand-Pré and nearby

villages were crammed onto transport ships that would carry them to various Anglo-American colonies” (Johnston, Kerr, and Fillion 2004, 64). Unfortunately, this process and the policy of deportation itself “continued sporadically until 1762” (Johnston, Kerr, and Fillion 2004, 67).

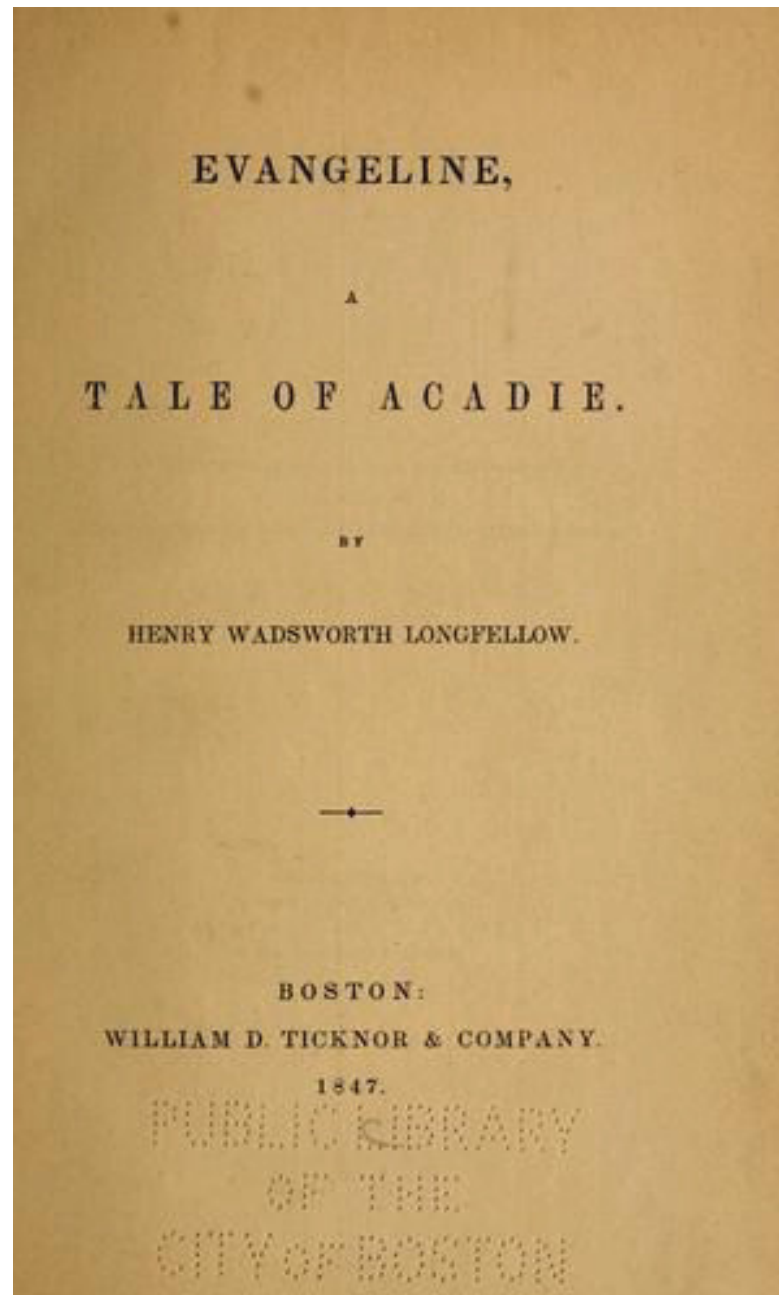
If we were to experience the expulsion ourselves, it would be understandable to feel incapable, as our inherent limitations are exposed in such events. “Acts of war and acts of pestilence are tides of Fate aided by the very limitations of the human, and are the shapers of individual life” (Griffiths, 1982, 31). Faith, however, does not have limitations. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume why people in such circumstances hold on to their faith, seeking internal refuge.

Throughout the years since 1755, we can begin to imagine what the Acadians’ sense of identity is like, especially when they were engulfed in new cultural norms within Anglo-American colonies (Johnston, Kerr, and Fillion 2004, 68). However, of all the suffering they have experienced, many argue that there is no comparable agony to “the torment of family separation” (Faragher 2005, 444). Unfortunately, other than reunion, there seems to be no remedy for such pain. What makes matters worse is that, even though the idea of reunion is desirable, tracing a family lineage scattered across the continent is an impossible task. All this harrowing experience exacerbates the feeling of dislocation, grief and isolation.

This compression of self and culture remains one of the lingering essences of the expulsion, and it can be argued that this palpable feeling persists even today. This thesis attempts to manifest this feeling not through an intellectual argument but through the movement of body in space.

The Poetic Interpretation Of The Expulsion

The Acadian expulsion mirrors the Christian narrative, which is the idea of being expelled from paradise, subsequently giving rise to a tale of wandering the earth, and ultimately culminating in a return to paradise. It is a powerful allegory that can be argued has a cross-cultural relevance. That is



Mythical account of Acadian Expulsion: Longfellow's *Evangeline* 1847 (photo from Open Library 1970)

perhaps why the expulsion was fictionalized in Longfellow's *Evangeline*, which in essence "was not the (factual) story of the Acadians but the tale of individual virtue" (Griffiths 1982, 28). In her journal article *Longfellow's Evangeline: The Birth and Acceptance of a Legend*, Naomi Griffiths, an Acadian historian, claims that the expulsion "was accepted by Longfellow's Acadians with stoic calm, Christian fortitude and resignation" (Griffiths 1982, 29). The poem posits a palpable sense of space and human emotion, with lines and stanzas creating vivid imagery, as if Longfellow is with a hand-held camera documenting the varying levels of human suffering.

But on the shores meanwhile the evening fires had been kindled, Built of the driftwood thrown on the sands from wrecks in the tempest. Round them shapes of gloom and sorrowful faces were gathered, Voices of women were heard, and of men, and the crying of children. Haggard and hollow and wan, and without either thought or emotion. E'en as the face of a clock from which the hands have been taken. (Longfellow 1847, 22)

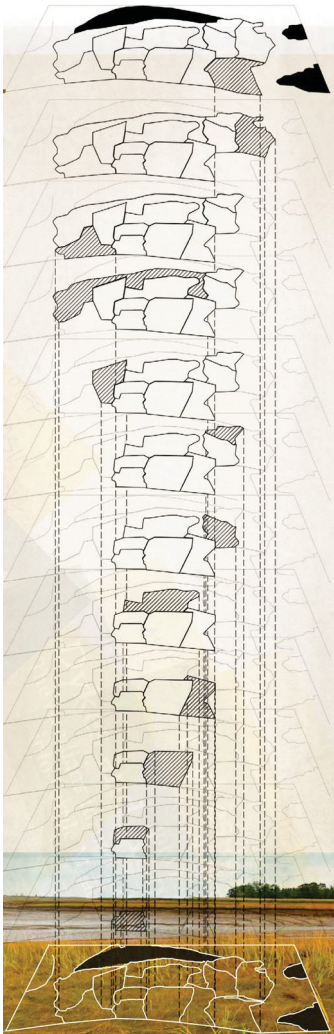
This evocative portrayal was analyzed in Griffiths' article.

One has the impression of being there, and of being forced to witness suffering, caught involuntarily in this unforeseen event, that unimaginable moment: the children running to the shore with toys in their hands by the side of wagons piled high with household goods, the sudden flare and smoke as the village catches fire, the face of Evangeline's father. (Griffiths 1982, 31)

Although the poem is not a fact, it can be argued that it was able to engage and advance human emotions, from which an existential understanding of the Acadian expulsion emerges. This is when the abstraction in fiction conveys a message that empirical facts cannot.

Becoming Their Own People

Before the expulsion, the Acadians lived in what the Mi'kmaq people call Acadie, or the land of abundance. The Acadians harnessed the sea and diked the lowlands, along the bays and tidal rivers, turning salt marshes into fertile farmlands (Acadian Museum of Louisiana 2022). It can be argued that the shared hardship in building dikes played an important role in fostering a strong sense of community among Acadian settlers. "Every aspect of the construction depended on the solidarity of the work crews, whether it was building the core of the dike, digging the ditches, cutting the sods to cover the dike or installing the sluice in the dike" (Ross 2002, 5). The Acadians' cooperative work ensured the seamless integration of various construction elements, embodying a unified commitment to the overall efficacy of the dike system. Even though the original Acadian settlers came from France, (Acadian Museum of Louisiana 2022), the hard labor of creating dikes transformed them into becoming their own people (Parks Canada Agency n.d.). This shared undertaking became a cornerstone of their unique cultural identity, uniting them as a resilient and self-reliant people with a distinct heritage.



Drawing of the acadian diking sequence at Grand-Pré (map information from Fowler 2009, 104).

Relationship With The Land And The Sea

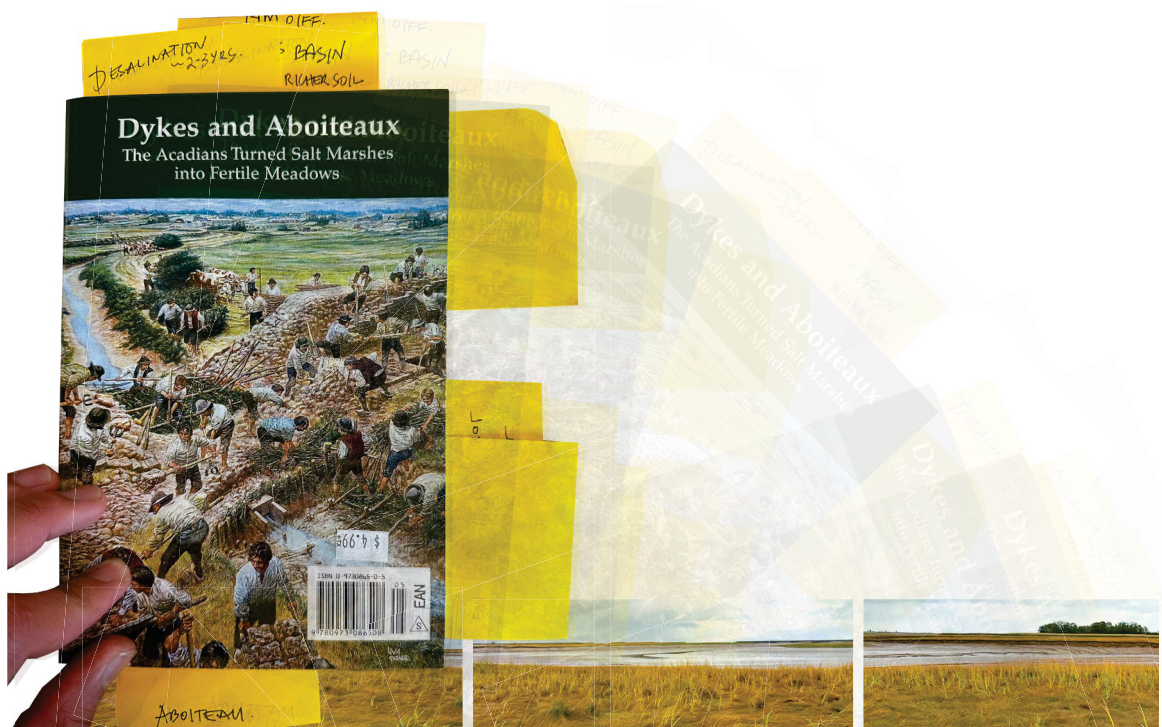
Establishing a settlement in the lowlands posed inherent challenges for the Acadians. Confronted with the formidable forces of nature, they grappled with the relentless tides of the Bay of Fundy, renowned as one of the highest tidal ranges in the world. Rather than engaging in territorial disputes with the Mi'kmaq people by staking a claim in the uplands, the Acadians displayed a diplomatic foresight. It is within reason to argue that this foresight was shared with the Mi'kmaq

people. We can therefore imagine the occasional tensions between these two groups, as well as the collective decision to coexist with the land for mutual benefit.

Considered as one of the most remarkable developments of seventeenth-century North American history, the Acadians managed to thrive on the farming and grazing of reclaimed marshland from the sea (Faragher 2005, 48). In order to do this, they executed preparatory measures, carefully navigating through a sequence of steps to transform the marshland into a fertile and productive area for farming.

First, the tides had to be prevented from flooding the land twice a day. Secondly, the salt had to be removed from the soil. Thirdly, rain water and runoff water had to be drained away in order to dry out the soil. (Ross 2002, 2)

The desalination process is incumbent in farming the marshland. To achieve this goal, the Acadians had to build dikes. “By placing sluices at strategic places in the dikes,



Drawing showing a culture that emerges from the land and the solidarity required of the Acadians to maintain the dikes (base photo from Ross 2002)



Photo collage of a sluice, which is an integral part of the Acadian diking system. It was discovered during the excavation of a drainage ditch. It is currently displayed at the museum in Grand-Pré.

the Acadians were able to drain off the fresh water. They also dug ditches in the marshes which facilitated drainage” (Ross 2002, 3). In her book *Dykes and aboiteaux : The Acadians Turned Salt Marshes into Fertile Meadows*, Sally Ross claims that the evolution of diking methods in Acadie resulted from the Acadians’ skills and adaptation to the unique characteristics of the Bay of Fundy (Ross 2002, 3). The Acadian dike, therefore, is a form of overcoming that is born of the place.

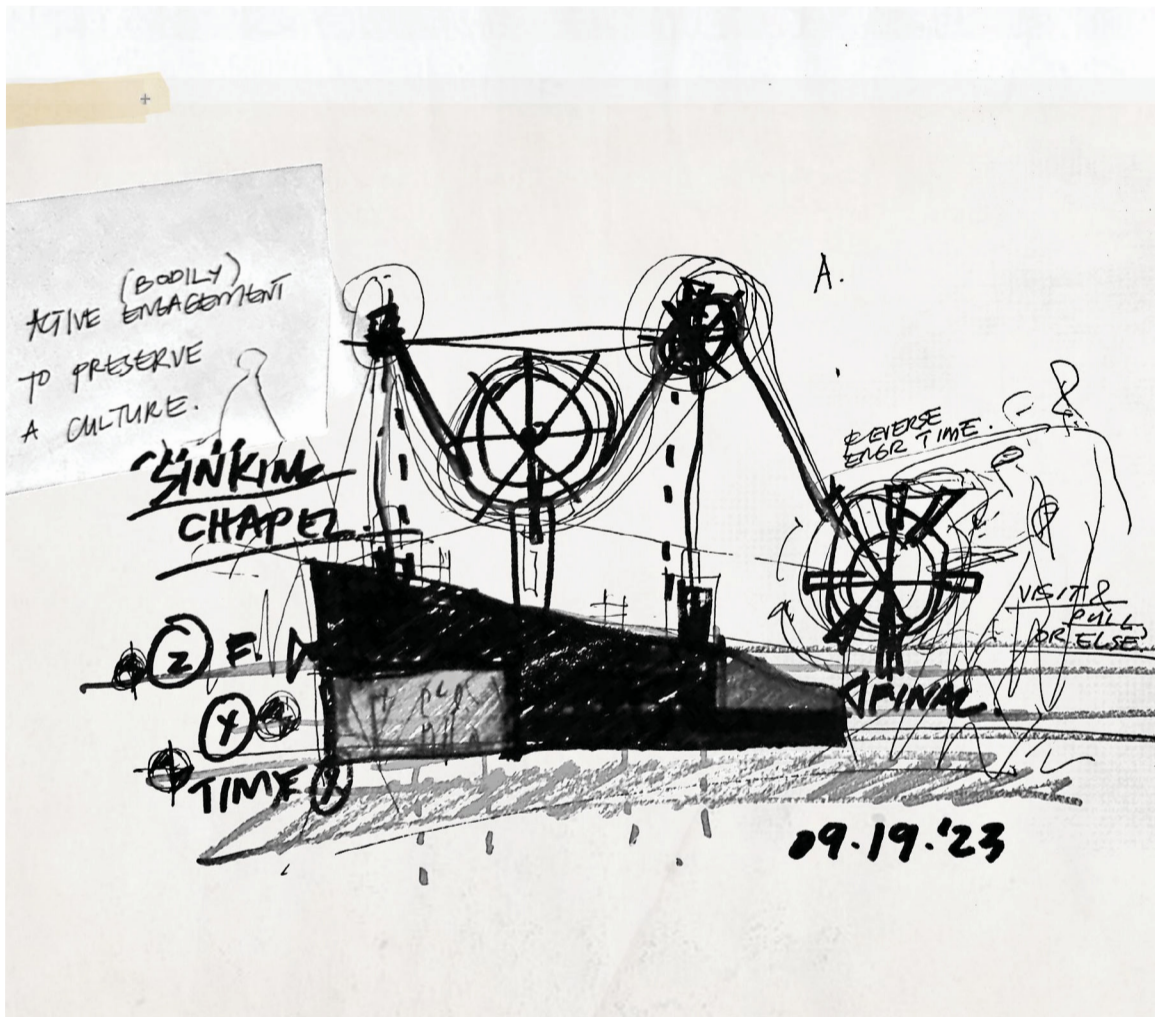
Acadian Faith

Evidences suggest that the Acadians made great efforts to reunite with their ancestral faith, before, during and after the expulsion. In his dissertation *The Acadians and Roman Catholicism: In Acadia from 1710 to the Expulsion, in Exile, and in Louisiana from the 1760s until 1803*, John Howard Young outlines the Acadians’ “practice of Roman Catholicism constituted a key element in their understanding that they were *une nation or a people*” (Young 1988, v). In three part dissertation, Young notes:

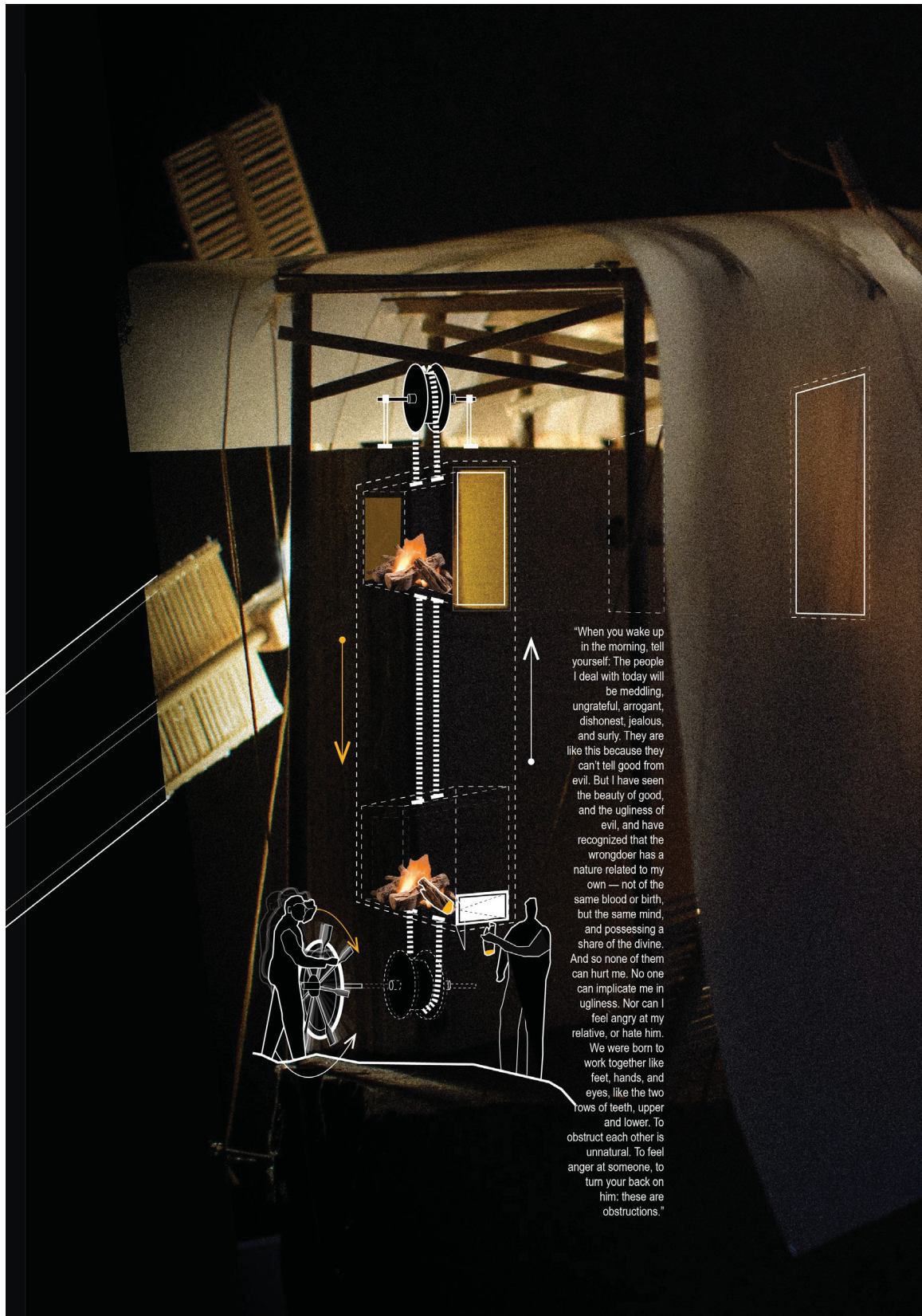
The Acadians were willing to sacrifice anything in order to be able to continue their practice of Roman Catholicism. In their negotiations with British officials during these years, one sees expressed a concern for their right to maintain their religious heritage as often as concerns about their right to remain neutral.

In Louisiana, the Acadians, despite having to rebuild their lives and their communities after the trauma of the expulsion and a subsequent period of exile, set about quickly to build churches and to acquire priests to serve them. (Young 1988, vi)

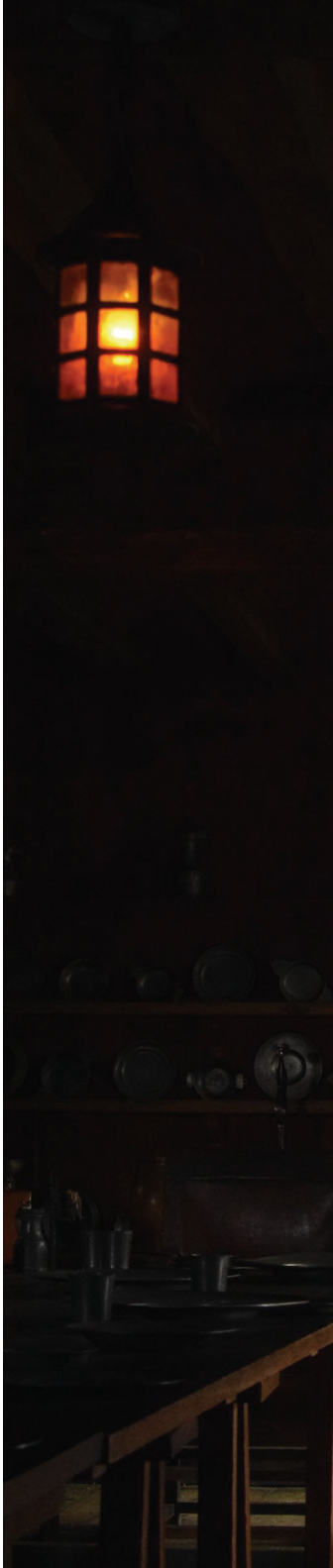
With this, it can be argued that the essence of Acadian identity is imbued with a profound spiritual dimension, intricately woven into the fabric of their existence through the Roman Catholic faith. This spiritual foundation serves as an enduring reservoir, an infinite wellspring from which



Sketch probing how faith can rise and fall depending on the level of interaction it receives from humans. Faith, in this sense, commits people to actively engage with it and to preserve it from "sinking". Later on, this sketch manifests into the design of an operable fire pit.



Sketch of an operable firepit; light studies probing how the operable fire pit keeps the yellow light lit (stoic quote from Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 15).



The yellow lights at Port Royal were reimagined as part of the grammar of witnessing faith.

the Acadians draw the sustenance needed to navigate and endure the trials of life. This was, of course, tested during the expulsion.

Futhermore, it can be argued that the vulnerability of the Acadian faith lies with forces beyond their control. This is when faith becomes subject to the ebb and flow of life's uncertainties. Faith, in this sense, can thrust any believer into a realm of emotional and spiritual exposure, making one susceptible to the impact of external circumstances. This vulnerability arises from the very essence of placing trust in the intangible, as faith often hinges on unseen forces or unmeasurable powers.

However, it is essential to note that this vulnerability is not necessarily a bad thing, but rather an inherent aspect of the human experience. It invites introspection, growth, and a deeper understanding of one's faith. The journey through vulnerability can strengthen faith: an inseparable duality suggesting that inevitable suffering is unfortunately integral to the promise of stillness.

This thesis seeks to storytell this duality through vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy.

Acadian Vernacular

The creation of "fence-like fish traps, or weirs often pronounced 'wares', on the expansive intertidal flats of the upper reaches of the Bay of Fundy" (Gordon 1993, 3) has a long history. Some say that it originated from the Mi'kmaq people, and that they are the ones that "showed the first white settlers this ingenious way of catching fish" (Gordon 1993, 6). However, some say it originated from the Acadians: "Cartographic evidence from the mid-1700s shows Acadian



Photograph taken from the museum at Grand-Pré, showing how the Acadians used the vernacular windmill as a practical way of processing grain in the valley.

settlement along the Economy shoreline where the weirs are presently located” (Gordon 1993, 6).

Whether or not the fishing weirs came from the Mi'kmaq people or the Acadians, it is reasonable to argue that it is a vernacular building practice: a local instrument born out of the direct experience of a place. A fishing weir, therefore, is both “practical and poetic” (McCarter, MacKay-Lyons, and Sweetapple 2017, 7-14), as it is not only logical to do such thing at such place, but it also manifest the unseen potential of that place. The fishing weir is a vernacular grammar that is common in different locations in Minas Basin, Bay of Fundy. The particular place where Acadians thrived for at least two generations.

In addition, it was common sense for Acadians to process the grains harvested from the fertile farmlands. With this, the Acadians harnessed the wind through community windmills for grinding grains. This windmill became a dot on a field: a typical “found-object” in their growing communities.

This thesis implements the fishing weir and the windmill as part of the witnessing vocabulary.



Fishing Fundy Waters - A weir (photo from Nova Scotia Archives 1988).

Embodiment Of Stoicism In The Vernacular

Reason From Within And From Without

The eternal message of stoicism is the art of enduring hardship with wisdom, courage and tranquility. It originates from an internal source, rooted in reason and common sense, focusing on what can be controlled and accepting what cannot. By adopting this mindset, we cultivate a resilient way of living that transcends external circumstance, especially if such circumstance is beyond our realm of control. This practice creates a sense of inner peace and fortitude in the face of inevitable suffering. In *Meditations* Marcus Aurelius reminds himself:

If you are pained by any external thing, it is not this thing that disturbs you, but your own **judgement** about it. And it is in your power to wipe out this judgement now. But if anything in your own disposition gives you pain, who hinders you from correcting your opinion? And even if you are pained because you are not doing some particular thing which seems to you to be right, why do you not rather act than complain? (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 103).

In stoic philosophy, action is the root of rectification. It promotes a logical approach, asserting that it is within our realm of control to act accordingly — responding with proper judgment and common sense to whatever life throws at us. Acting, in this sense, can be as simple as responding reasonably to a particular situation — a response that arises from within, guided by our internal logic. Can we do something about it? If the answer is “no”, then we must learn that full acceptance is cathartic; if the answer is “yes”, then we must know that courage is a moral virtue.

True disturbance, in this sense, is the conscious decision to continue complaining, despite knowing full well that it will not help. For the stoics, it is better to attend to a reasonable course of action rather than to waste our present moment

complaining. It implies that there is justice in confronting the chaos with a reasonable disposition.

This, in part, relates to how vernacular architecture responds to a particular place. By harnessing timeless themes in architecture — building tradition, availability and limits of materials, landscape, and climate — it can be argued that vernacular architecture always chooses “to act with reason rather than to complain”. As a result, a typical vernacular building has a calm and silent disposition. It does not impose something in the environment. It simply is there, just being. As an object in the field, the vernacular manifests deep-seated understanding of place and material culture.

With its efficacy to serve the need of its community, it is within reason to suggest that vernacular architecture is a logical response that arises from without, guided by the limits and possibilities imposed by a particular place, as well as the necessity for human survival.

Returning to Aurelius’ quote, vernacular architecture can be argued as a form of “judgment”: a just manifestation of a particular place.



Weir at Economy point at Minas Basin (photo from Gordon 1993, 55).



Vernacular saddlebag (“bump”), typical in Acadian houses and farmhouses, reimagined as a totemic element that facilitates embodied architectural experiences (based photo from Nova Scotia Archives 1951).



Collage drawing synthesizing other Acadian vernacular done in their land (diking system), and in their culture (Le Moniteur Acadien).

From left to right: (1) First Acadian Newspaper (based photo from Le Moniteur Acadien 1867); (2) Acadian Diking Sequence at Grand-Pré (rendition from Fowler 2009, 104); (3) Sluice / Hollowed-out Log (collage photo of artifact from Grand-Pré museum); (4) Section Diagram of a Sluice above and a sketch of a possible architecture below.

Impermanence And Weathering

This thesis argues that time, or transience, is a shared theme between vernacular architecture and stoicism. In

Meditations Marcus Aurelius notes:

See how everything is forgotten, and look at the *chaos of infinite* time on each side of [the present], and the emptiness of applause, and the changeableness and want to judgement in those who pretend to give praise, and the narrowness of the space within which it is circumscribed [...] One is that things do not touch the soul, for they are external and remain immovable; but our perturbations come only from the opinion which is within [...] The universe is transformation; life is opinion.

[...] Death is such as generation is, a mystery of nature; composition out of the same elements, and a decomposition into the same; and altogether not a thing of which any man should be ashamed, for it is not contrary to [the nature of] a reasonable animal, and not contrary to the reason of our constitution. (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 34-36)

Here we can see how Aurelius contemplates about the impermanence of life and how external accolades, in the end, does not really matter. For both past and the future offers the “chaos of infinite time” and what ultimately matters is the present moment.

It is important to note, however, that this concept of impermanence amplifies the present moment with purpose and meaning. Aurelius urges us to understand that the “universe is transformation” and that whatever we do in the present is our opinion about life. The looming reality of death, in this case, must be confronted with the *urgency of the now*. The passage of time, which slowly morphs living beings into decay, therefore, is not something to be ashamed of but something to be accepted as part of our natural constitution. Death, much like the process of birth, is an essential part of the construction and deconstruction of life, of humans. Thus, accepting death as an integral part



Practical and Poetic: Weathered vernacular dory shop in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.

of the broader narrative of existence allows for a deeper appreciation of life.

This notion bears semblance to the concept of weathering in vernacular architecture. In *On Weathering* Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow claims that “weathering is an inevitable occurrence to be recognized and made use of in the uncertainties of its manifestation” (Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow 1993, 16). Over time, weathering becomes a transformative process, subtly shaping the character of the building as if a new layer of meaning emerges from without. Embracing this inevitability not only requires an understanding of the complex interplay between materials and climatic conditions but also engages architects to integrate the effects of weathering into design.

Both death in stoicism and weathering in vernacular architecture share a common theme — they illuminate the parallel between human existence and the passage of time. Rather than denying or resisting these natural processes, both perspectives embrace them as an integral components of life and architectural evolution.

This thesis seeks to explore impermanence to amplify a particular experience or ritual.

Maximizing The Minimum

Another theme that vernacular architecture and stoicism share is acting locally. Vernacular architecture capitalizes on the limits imposed by a particular place by focusing on the essentials. It is through this maximization of the minimum that the vernacular achieves the “poetry of economy” (McCarter, MacKay-Lyons, and Sweetapple 2017, 13). In the similar vein, in *Meditations* Aurelius notes: “Try how

the life of the good man suits you, the life of him who is satisfied with his portion out of the whole, and satisfied with his own just acts and benevolent disposition” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 39).

Both the vernacular and the stoic perspectives encourage us how meaning and modesty can be found in the minimum; and that there is a sense of justice in finding contentment with what is local, both externally in the world, and internally in ourselves. After all, there is a “deeply democratic ethic which elevates simplicity to a moral idea, where modesty is considered a virtue” (MacKay-Lyons 1995, 12).

This thesis probes into local, individual, and commonsensical actions and how that can compound into something that the community can benefit from.

Stillness Through Reason

In *Meditations* Marcus Aurelius wrote: “Tranquility is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind [...] let your principles be brief and fundamental” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 33). This relates to the strange silenceness palpable in a typical vernacular building. Perhaps it is because the vernacular evokes a “good ordering” of building resources, as if common sense manifests itself into construction techniques, material culture, and scale. The vernacular, in turn, always appear “timeless and always the appropriate thing to do” (McCarter, MacKay-Lyons, and Sweetapple 2017, 8).

Moreover, common sense is subtle and unassuming, yet often appropriate to the demands of the situation. One can argue that the reason why the vernacular building evokes *stillness* is because of it being partly modern-looking and

partly primitive-looking, which echoes Louis Kahn's creative process: "one day I found myself back at the starting point: the search for modernity was a return to the origins" (McCarter, MacKay-Lyons, and Sweetapple 2017, 16).

Furthermore, in *Meditations* Aurelius wrote about his admiration to one of his mentors, Apollonius, noting his "undeviating steadiness of purpose; and [how he looks] to nothing else, except to reason" (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 6). Later in the book he asks himself: "Do you have reason? — I have — Why do you not use it then? For if this does its own work, what else do you wish?" (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 37).

In a way, seeking reason is a retreat back to the inner landscapes of the mind ("a return to the origins", as Kahn claims). It invites introspection, identifying the source which prompts us to think or feel in a particular way. Once this source is understood, reason takes on a purposeful role, committing us to respond with the most sensible way possible. In essence, reason navigates the complexities of our internal and external worlds. This, in turn, leads us to the quiet landscapes of the mind where inner peace and *stillness* exist.

It can be argued that vernacular architecture is like that, too. A vernacular building retreats back to the source and looks to nothing else, except to the most reasonable ways in building construction, specific to a particular climate, landscape and material culture. It is for this reason that a typical vernacular building, especially the one that has seen the passage of time, evokes *stillness* or a kind of energy that is hard to understand yet impossible to deny.

This thesis seeks to explore that *stillness*.



Stillness in the field: a vernacular building in Blue Rocks, Nova Scotia.

Embodiment Of Stoicism In The Acadians

Neutral Stance In The War

Britain and France fought over Acadia in the early 18th century. Acadian life did not change much after Britain took over Acadia in 1713. However, in 1730, the Acadians took a neutrality oath. This oath stated that the Acadians would remain neutral if there was a war between the British and the French. (Glover 2021)

The Acadians' commitment to a neutral stance — refraining from aligning with either the French or the British — is a testament not only to their unyielding spirit but also to their reasonable disposition. In choosing to remain neutral, they demonstrate a remarkable resilience, standing firm in their convictions despite the risks and pressures from both parties. It can be argued that their neutrality reflects an “undeviating steadiness of purpose” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 6) and immovable disposition, emphasizing a desire for fairness and a commitment to principles that transcend political affiliations. “The Acadians were a people visited unwarrantedly by a war begun elsewhere by people to whom they had no real link (French) and with whom they had no deep quarrel (British)” (Griffiths 1982, 34). Because of this, it is within reason to argue that it was common sense for them to side with neither the French nor the British. They chose a diplomatic path guided by common sense and integrity.

In *Meditations* Marcus Aurelius reprimands himself: “Do not labour unwillingly or without regard to the common interest, or without due consideration, or with distraction. [...] let the deity which is in you be the guardian of a living being” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 27). Later in the book he reminds himself: “Does another do me wrong? Let him look to it. He has his own disposition, his own activity. I now have

what the universal nature now wills me to have and I do what my nature now wills me to do” (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 57).

This thesis argues that the Acadians’ histories and position closely align with the principles of stoicism. The Acadians’ decision to remain neutral relates to Aurelius’ claim that we should not do any labour without considering it will benefit the common good. In addition, the Acadians’ commitment to remain neutral speak volumes to their own agency as a people.

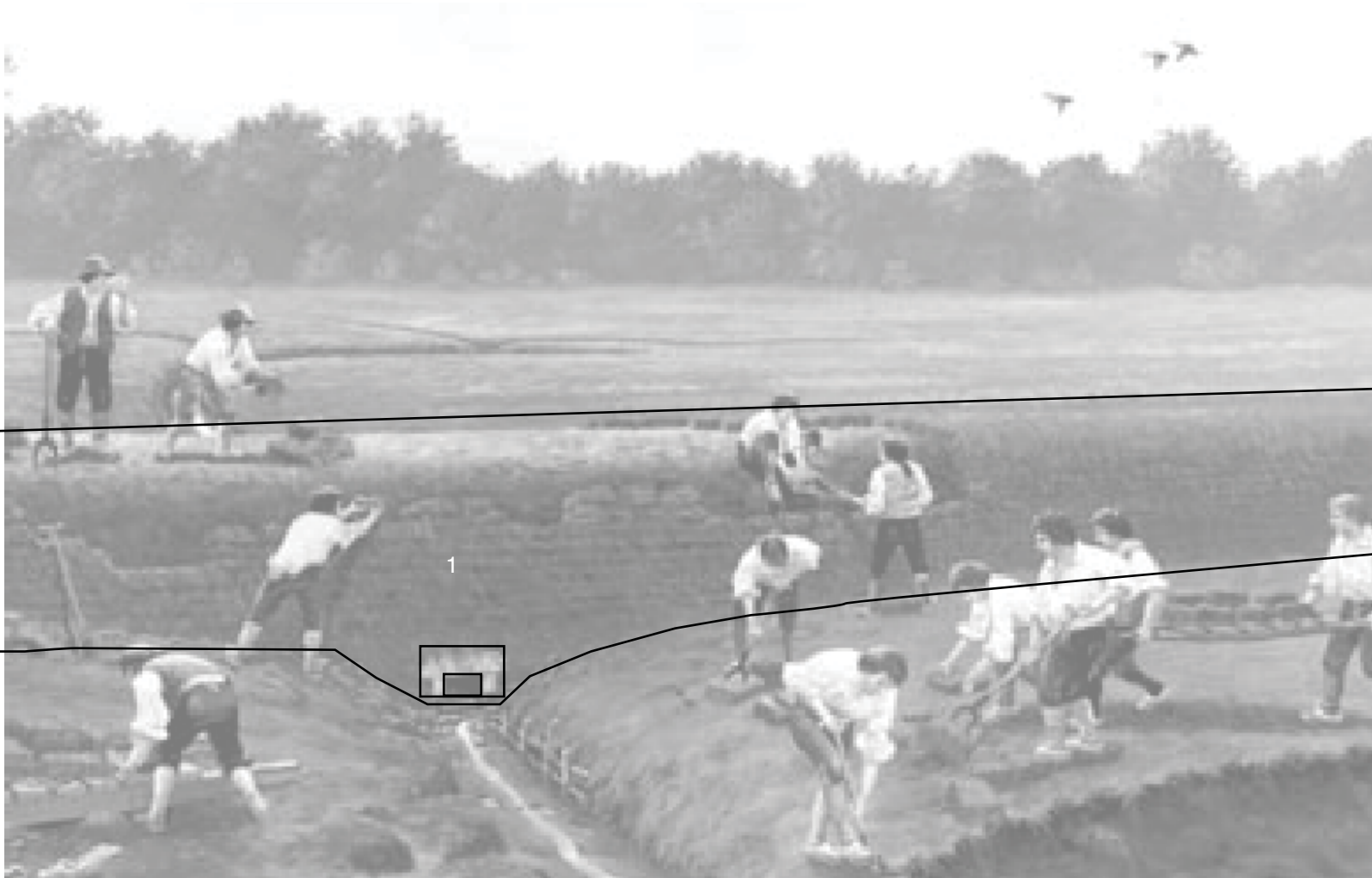
Acadian Aboiteau

Derived from the intimate knowledge of the land and the sea, the Acadians created the *aboiteau*. This term encapsulates not just a practical engineering solution but as an expression of Acadian vernacular. Its definition below summarizes how it is an ingenious technology that is born out of the place:

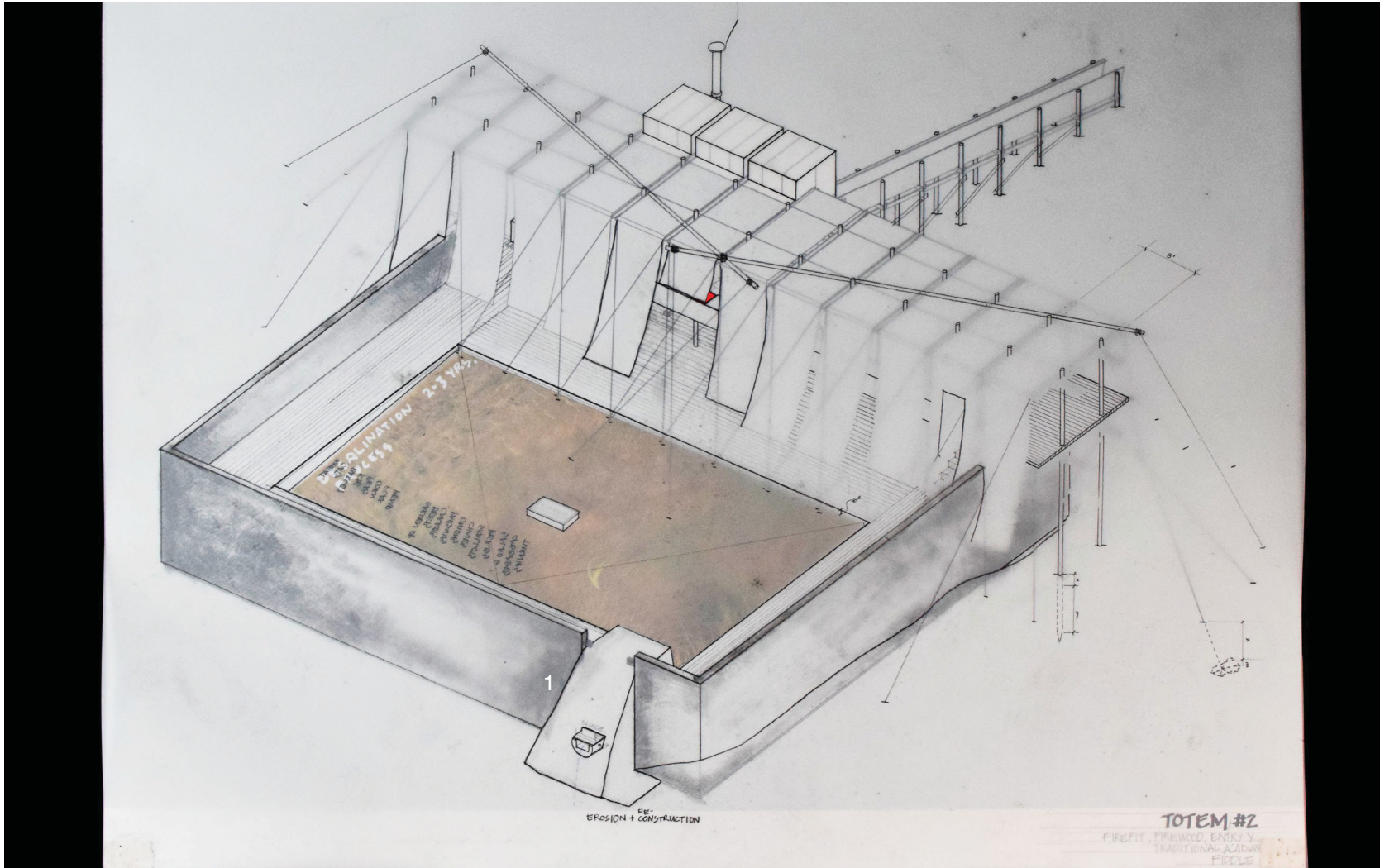
The aboiteau — a sluice fitted with a clapet that was forced shut by the rising tide on the seaward side, then pushed open as the tide fell by water draining systems from the fields — is found neither on saunier (saltmakers) dikes nor in the drainage systems in Poitou (France), and the word *aboiteau* itself has no equivalent in continental French. The colonists developed this system during the 1640s, and it was in full operation by the early 1650s. (Faragher 2005, 49)

In its tangible form, an *aboiteau* comprises of a hollowed-out log, a wooden valve, and the dike structure. It is a vernacular architecture that is a testament to the Acadians’ ability to maximize the minimum, working with limited resources yet somehow realizing the potential of a particular place.

In its intangible form, an *aboiteau* embodies a collective wisdom that arises from the need to overcome the relentless tides of the Bay of Fundy. This *overcoming* relates to Aurelius’ notion that any obstacle is an opportunity:



The dike created a boundary that allows for the cultivation of the land; photo of Acadians repairing the dike; (1) aboiteau (base image from Vienneau 1720).



Using the same grammar of the dike, that is, building a wall, how can the salt marshes be framed as the center of experience; sketch of the *Walled Garden* showing the use of concrete retaining wall to allow for the desalination process to occur; (1) aboiteau.

For the mind converts and changes every hindrance to its activity into an aid. And so that which is a hindrance is made a furtherance to an act and that which is an obstacle on the road helps us on this road. (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 56)

In essence, an *aboiteau* epitomizes the Acadians' resilience and resourcefulness when confronted with challenges. Much like how stoicism reframes obstacles as opportunities to grow, it is within reason to argue that the Acadians saw the creation of *aboiteau* as opportunities to thrive as a "*une nation or a people*" (Young 1988, v), especially if there is no other choice.

Companionship With The Mi'kmaq People

Acadians were known to be in good terms with their neighbour: the Indigenous people of Acadie, the Mi'kmaq people. In fact, there were marriages between the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq:

Dozens of church-registered interethnic unions were a significant factor in the making of the Acadian community. One of the first such marriages took place in 1635, when twenty-two-year-old Francois Gatrot married Marie, a Mikmaw woman. (Faragher 2005, 46)

The union between these two independent communities is perhaps one of the most enduring lessons in human condition, that is, despite our occasional disagreements and fundamental human differences, it is possible for us to coexist for mutual benefit. Through this coexistence, the Acadians "learned the indigenous arts of fishing and hunting, methods of making clothing and moccasins from skins, furs, and animal sinew, and the many uses of birchbark" (Faragher 2005, 48). The Acadians refrained from disrupting the established way of life of the Mi'kmaq people, characterized by migratory hunting and fishing. The Acadians ceded the uplands to the Mi'kmaq people and settled in the lowlands in the salt marshes (Faragher 2005, 48).

With this set up, we can begin to imagine that even though there were occasional conflicts, the decision of the Acadians and the Mik'maq people to coexist created a sense of companionship. This echoes Aurelius' reminder to himself that at the end of the day "we are made for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature [...]" (Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 15).

Over the years of living together, the bond between the Acadians and the Mik'maq people grew stronger. This is partly because both communities faced persecution. "During the Expulsion of the Acadians in the mid-1700s, many Mi'kmaq communities sheltered Acadian families in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia" (Smith 2017).

This thesis proposes rituals that can teach us how cooperation, can and will, cultivate culture and camaraderie.

Obstacle Is The Way

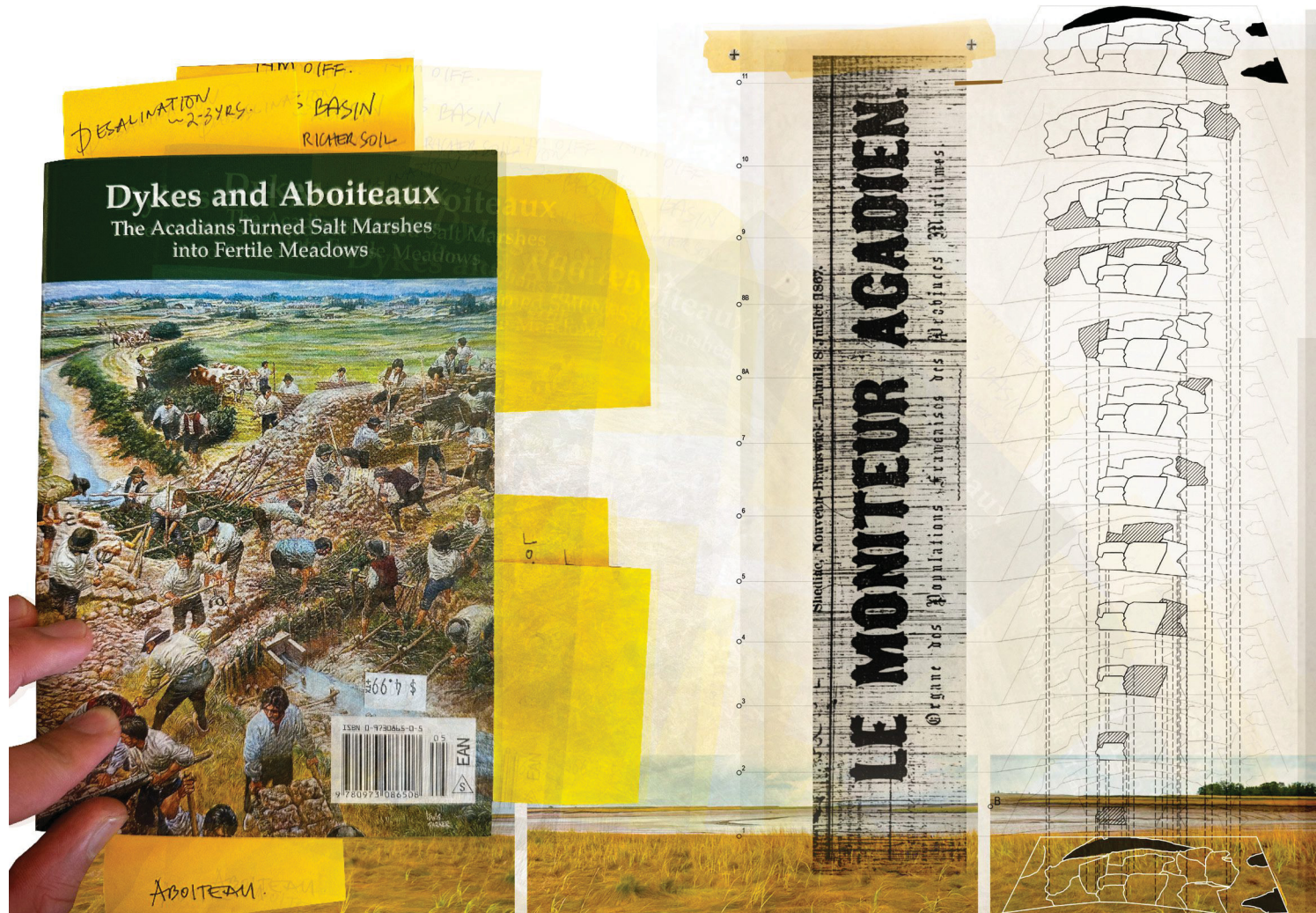
After the expulsion, the Acadians found ways to reclaim their sense of identity as a people. In the late 19th century, they had a renaissance. Part of this renaissance is in the "realm of education were the construction of a system of elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. The link between all the members of this community was created in 1867 with the birth of the first Acadian newspaper, *Le Moniteur Acadien*" (Braud 1999, 75).

This newspaper has an underlying energy similar to diking. It echoes the grit the Acadians once had when they reclaimed the land from the sea. This time, however, it is not the land that they are reclaiming, its their heritage and distinct identity as one people. The newspaper, in turn, was

a response to the necessity to survive as a culture, much like how the Acadian diking (*aboiteau*) is a response to the necessity to survive in a place. This thesis argues that both the newspaper and the Acadian diking (*aboiteau*) are forms of *overcoming*.



The village of Grand-Pré and its fertile meadow reclaimed from the sea (photo from Robertson, n.d.).



Collage showing that the newspaper and the Acadian diking (*aboiteau*) are both forms of overcoming, cultivating not only the land but also a strong sense of camaraderie (from left to right: base photo from Ross 2002; from Le Moniteur Acadien 1867; from Fowler 2009, 104).

Chapter 3: Listening (Analysis)

Two Places of Acadian Culture

The expulsion led the Acadians to different places (France, the Caribbean, Britain, other British colonies). One of these places is south Louisiana, where the Acadians initially established communities in the countryside to the west of New Orleans. By the early 1800s, approximately 4,000 Acadians had migrated to Louisiana and made it their home (National Parks Service, n.d.). This has resulted into a lot of intermarriages which eventually changed their ethnic name from Acadians to *Cajuns*.

In the last 100 years, Cajuns faced the same challenge as any minorities living in the USA. “Americanization is what occurred — rapid, widespread Americanization, sparked by the onset of World War II and fueled by the convergence of several ensuing trends and events during the postwar period” (Bernard 2003, xii). This is the time of the cold war, the vietnam war, McCarthyism, the assassination of JFK, the black power movement, the civil rights movement, the trip to the moon, the Beatles, the LSD era, the interstate highways, the advent of oil industry, to name only a few — an era of American patriotism, which means that for south Louisianians, schools continued to punish and humiliate Cajun children if they were to speak any french (Bernard 2003, 25).

Although the Cajuns have developed their distinct identity from the Acadians and have faced their own set of challenges as Americans, they show signs of devotion to their Acadian heritage. A prime example of this is the annual boat pilgrimage at Bayou Teche, Louisiana, where

the Cajun people re-enact and re-trace the route that the Acadians took some 200 years ago when they first arrive in the south (Herpin 2022). This reinforces the argument that, although Nova Scotia and Louisiana are two distinct places, there lies the lingering memory of the expulsion that links them together.

In an attempt to probe into the essence of the Acadian cultural landscape, this thesis is tested on specific landscapes in both Nova Scotia and Louisiana.

Focusing (Proposed Testing Grounds)

Horton Landing, Nova Scotia

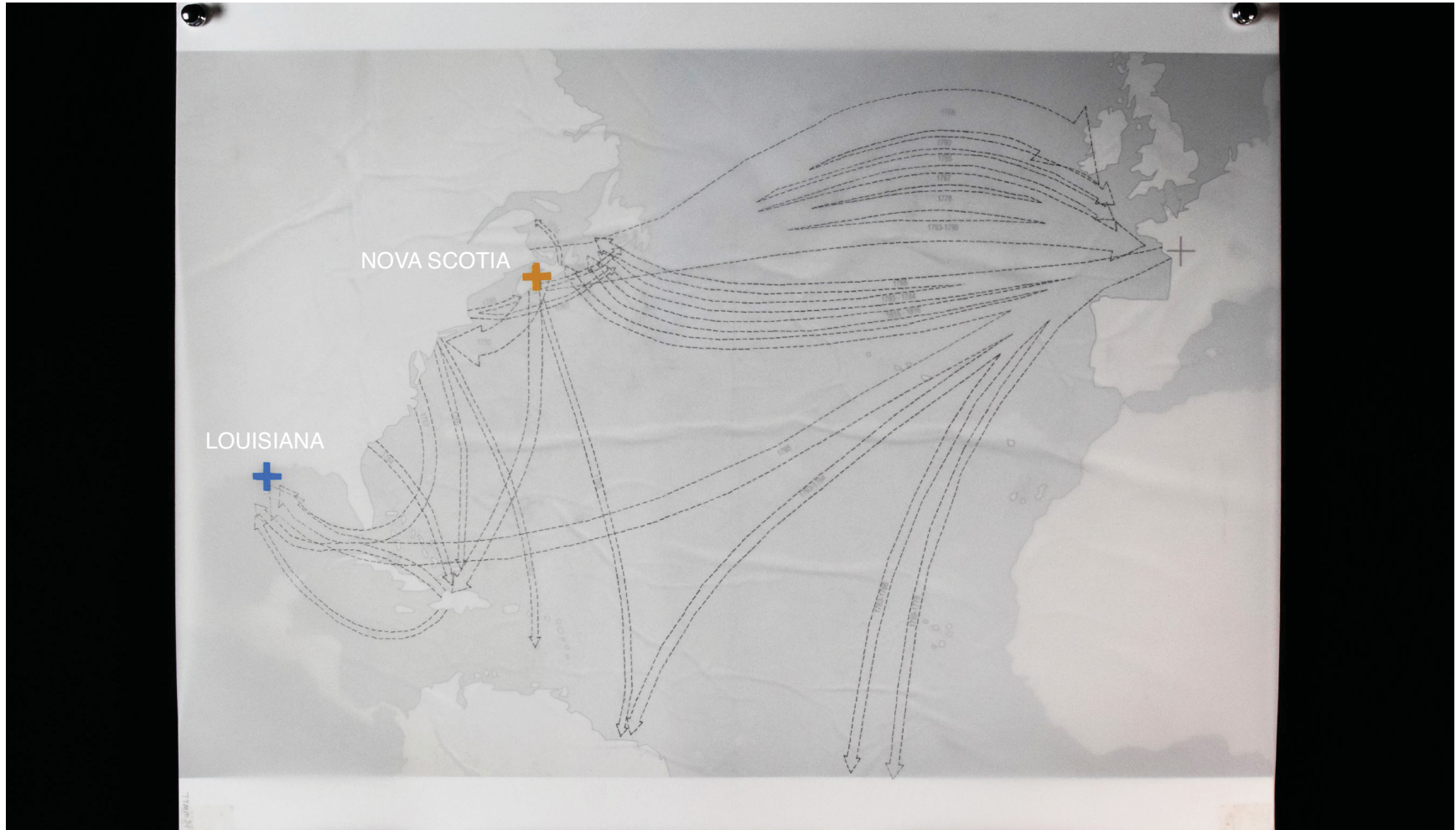
This thesis selects two testing grounds, with Horton Landing, Nova Scotia being the first and Bayou Teche, Louisiana being the second.

Horton Landing, Nova Scotia holds significance as it commemorates the 1755 Acadian Expulsion. While acknowledging that other locations in Nova Scotia also mark this historical event, Horton Landing is chosen for two distinct reasons. First is because of its proximity to Grand-Pré: a UNESCO world heritage site that is designed to attract not just Acadians, but also non-Acadians: tourists, outsiders, etc. Second is because there are less Acadian population in Grand-Pré, compared to other Acadian communities in Nova Scotia. These two reasons provide an opportunity to reach a wider audience, making Horton Landing a common ground for both Acadians and non-Acadians.

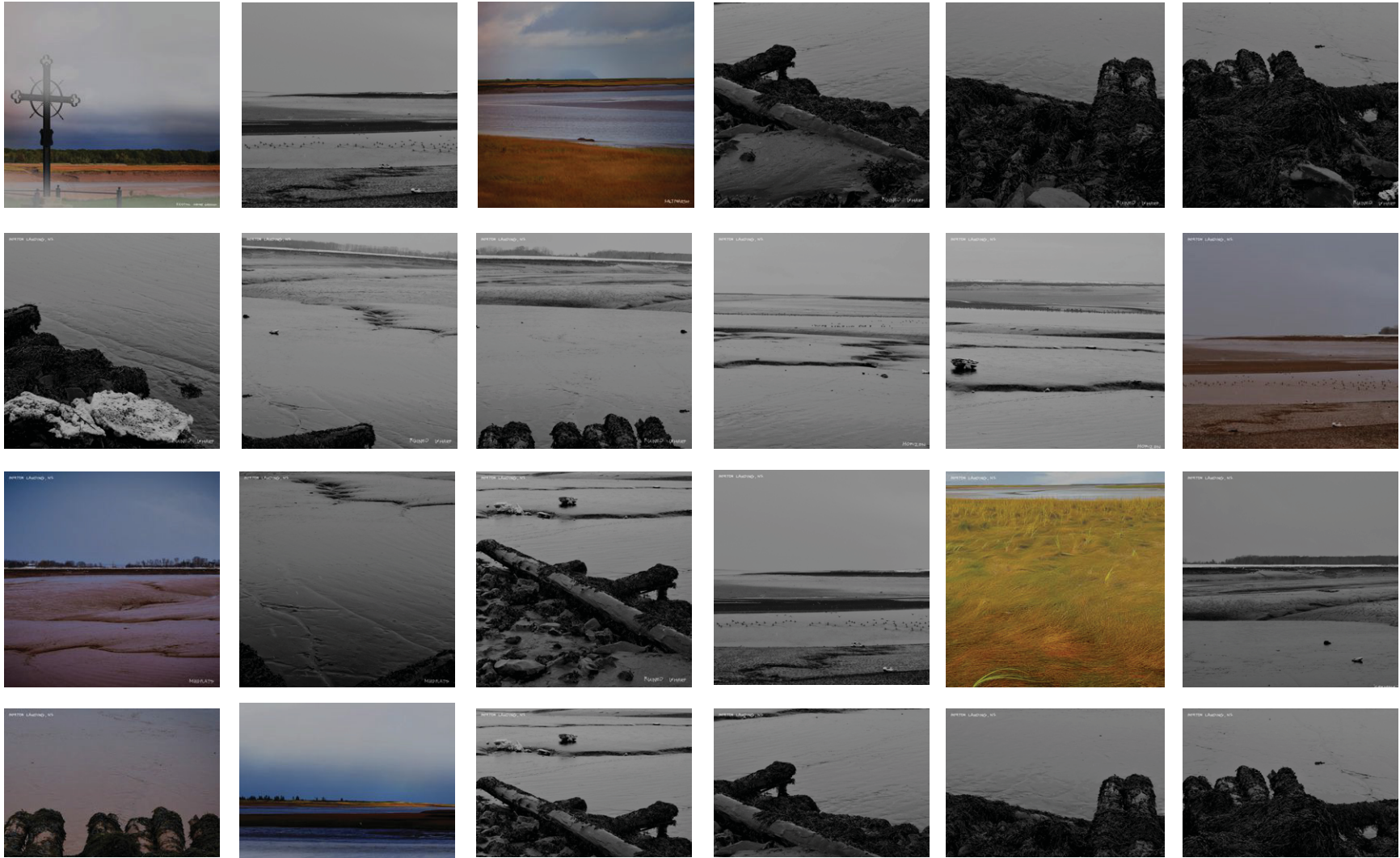
The analysis at Horton Landing lean heavily on live encounters, on *witnessing* what is and what could be. The intent is to *witness* the site: its salt marshes, its inter-tidal zone, its site-based phenomena, its wind, its mudflats, its



Sketch of (1) Horton Landing in relation to (2) Halifax, Nova Scotia (+/- 1 hour drive); (3) Port Royal is where the *found-objects* were collected (+/- 2.5 hour drive from Halifax); the dots and circles represent Acadian population, showing less in Horton Landing and more in others (map information from The University Of Maine 2001).



The home for the Acadians is the present day Nova Scotia, and small parts of New Brunswick, Maine and Quebec. The dash lines here are the ghost of the expulsion where families were scattered far and wide, forced to settle in different parts of English colonies and France, but eventually most of them resettled in Nova Scotia and Louisiana, which this thesis focused on (map information from Leblanc, 1967).



First-hand encounter of the Horton Landing site prompts the latency of the tides, the dance of the grass against the wind, and the strange silenceness of the horizon.

soul, its temporal essences. Much like how Louis Kahn asks the brick what it *wants to be*, the analysis incorporates a bit of theorizing and dreaming, asking what the salt marshes and the mudflats *want to be*. It delves into the behavior of the tides in relation to the moon and conducts a topographical analysis of the high and low tide marks. As a conclusion, the northeast of the site prompts an opportunity to work with the mudflats and the southeast prompts an opportunity to work with the salt marshes.

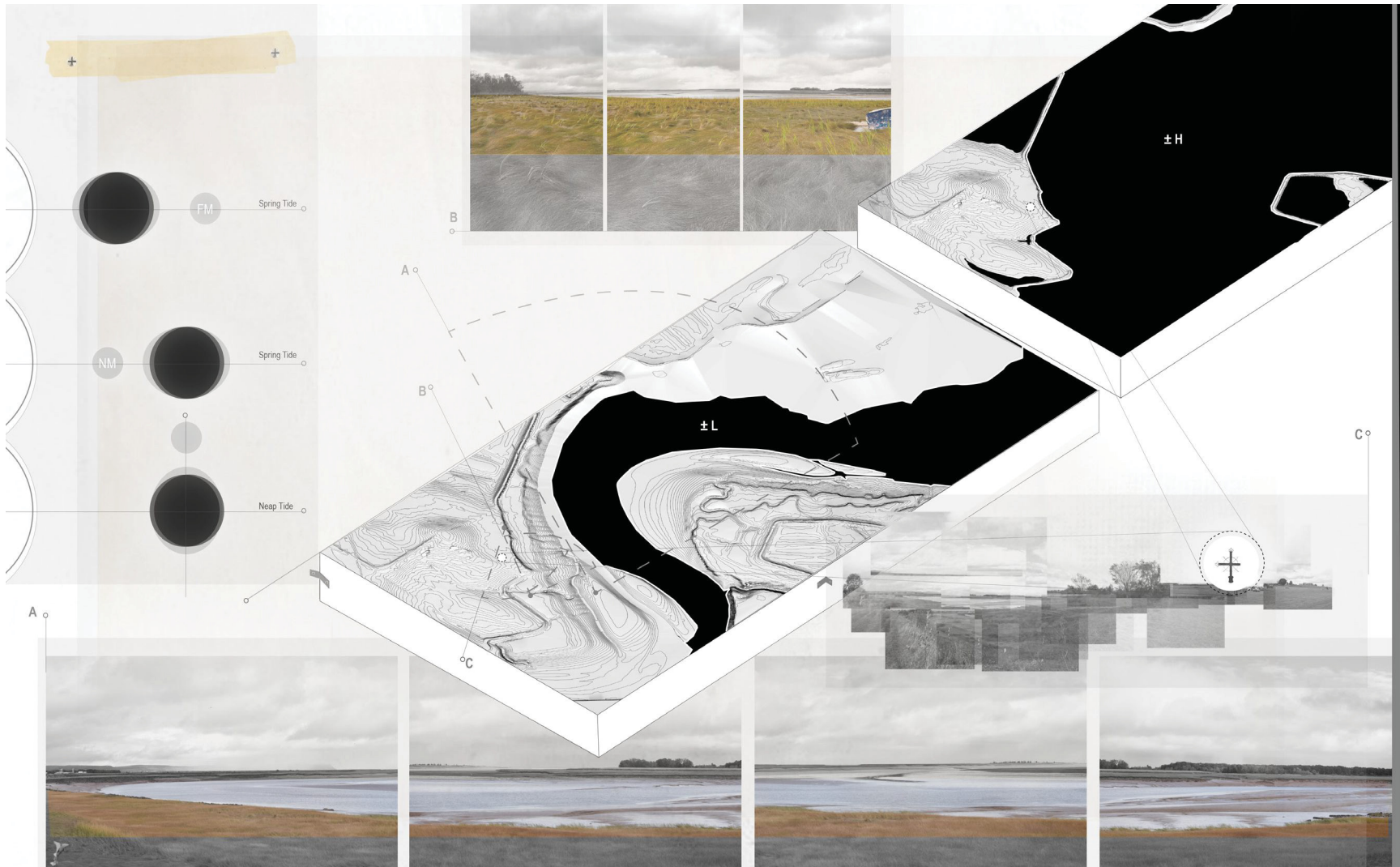
Overall, the assessment of Horton Landing is that, despite the place being emotionally charged, it lacks a sacred event. This is the “gap” that this thesis intends to probe into.



Photo collage highlighting the edge conditions at Horton Landing, NS. It was understood that the site has a sense of tranquility that is hard to describe yet difficult to ignore.



Probing into the salt marshes and the mudflats prompts two particular interventions: one about culture, and one about faith. Like two stones in a field, not too close and yet not too far to each other. This allows visitors to stroll and meander at their will. So meaning is not forced, but slowly understood through the sense of movement (map of Horton Landing from Google Earth 2023a).



Sketch attempting to understand how the tides dance in relation with the moon, the sun and the earth (topographical info processed from Lidar data from Province of Nova Scotia 2023).



Photo collage showing a possible location for an intervention with the land, with the salt marshes. Listening to this area of the site invites a sort of *dike-chitecture*, a grammar similar to the vernacular acadian dikes (aboiteau).



Photo showing a possible location for an intervention with the sea, with the intertidal zone: a mud-mound that partly appears and disappears with the tides. Listening to this mudflat area of the site invites a sort of *sink-chitecture*, a grammar similar to the vernacular fishing weirs.



Photos of Horton Landing reveal the serene beauty of the salt marshes, where one can practically feel the damp mud underfoot, evoking the latency of the tides. Among these images are remnants of what appears to be a ruined wharf, adding to the site's mystique. While the accuracy of these observations may vary, meaning whether this is factually a ruined wharf or not, it does not matter. This thesis prioritizes capturing the poetic essence of the landscape, recognizing that poetry transcends mere factual accuracy.



A sketch testing how architecture can occupy the existing ruined wharf through a stair, delicately carved into the wharf-fabric: a subtle invitation to slowly descend to the mudflats below.

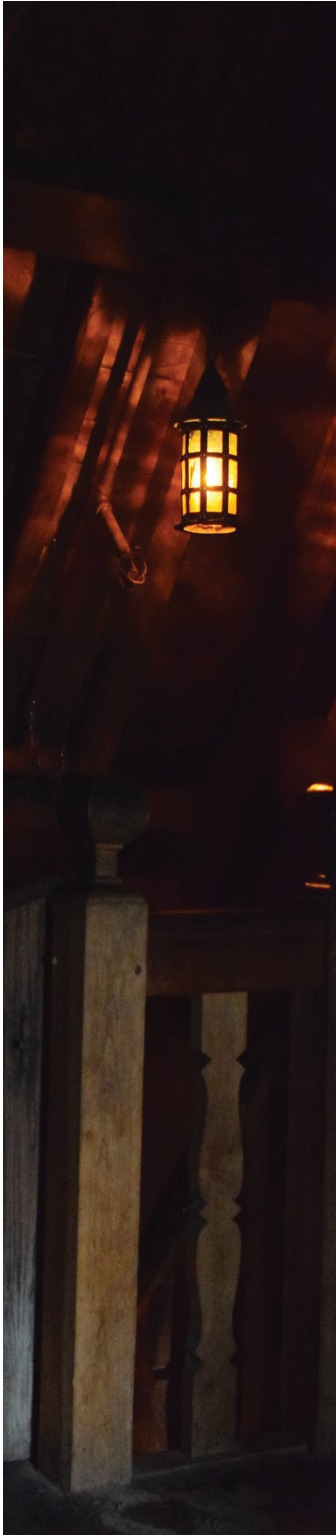
Port Royal

The analysis of Horton Landing led to the site visit at Port Royal. Port Royal was the capital of Acadia and the place where the very first French colonists built their home — *The Habitation* — which today is a National Historic Site. It was a site of cultural exchange that witnessed the friendship between the Mi'kmaq people and the colonists; the complex struggle for dominance in North America between France and England; the multiple treaties signed for changing governance; the incoming Acadian migrants from France; the mixture of bloodlines between Acadian and Mi'kmaq; and the growing communities that farm the marshlands (Johnston et. al 2004, 11-17). As a dynamic hub of Acadia, it can be argued that Port Royal is teeming with immaterial essences that can be harnessed for any creative pursuits.

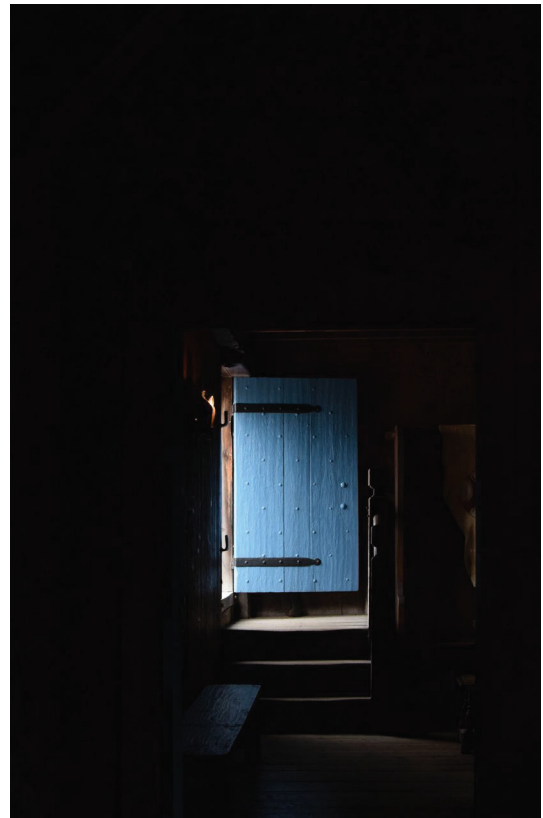
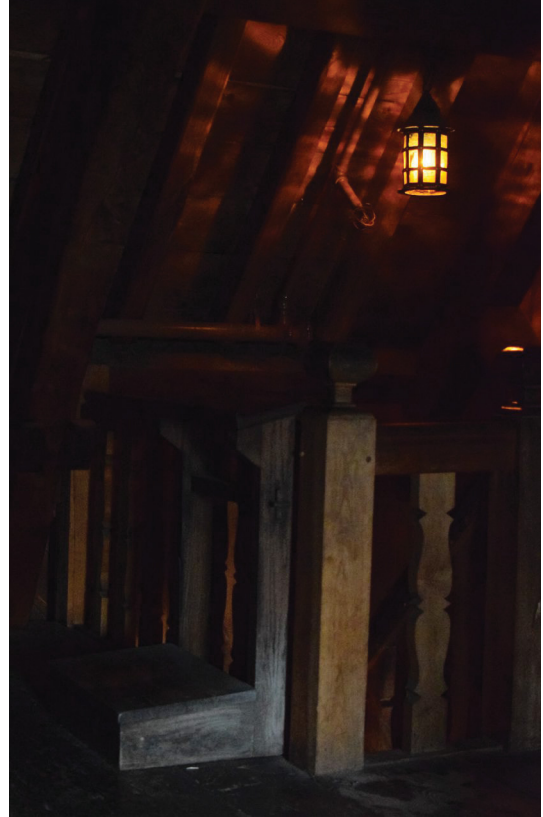
As a capital of Acadia, where cultural, political, and social forces converged, Port Royal left an indelible mark. This thesis takes the position that Port Royal functions as an anthropological site, inhabited by ghosts rich of “history and story, memory and possibility” (Macy 2008).

The following images show a grammar of atmospheres collected in Port Royal. With a closer look, these photographs tend to engage and advance our poetic imagination: an imaginary exercise or a *mode of witnessing* the place where we can gain “emotional, aesthetic, existential and atmospheric intelligences” (Pallasmaa and Zambelli 2020, 34-35). Intuition, in this case, is a valid method of analysis and has its place in architectural research.

In one of his essays in his encyclopedic work *Inseminations: Seeds for Architectural Thought*, Pallasmaa claims: “I have become so impressed with the power of our atmospheric



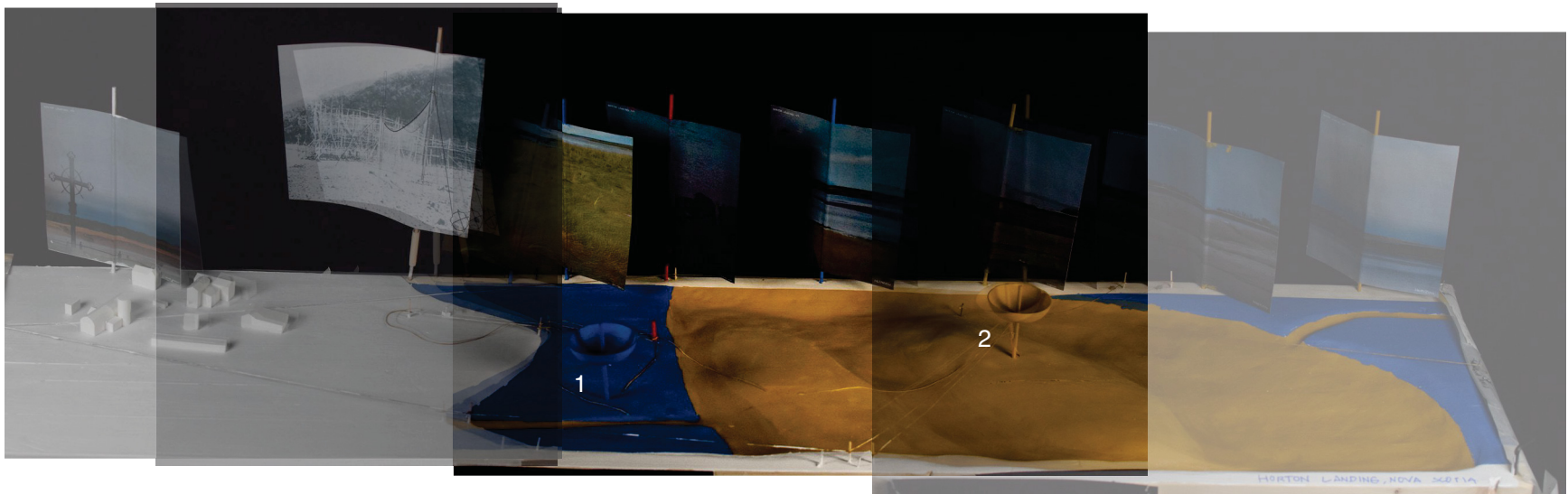
Yellow light at Port Royal: reimagined as the symbol of the Acadian faith, a fundamental part of the “sacred” vocabulary.



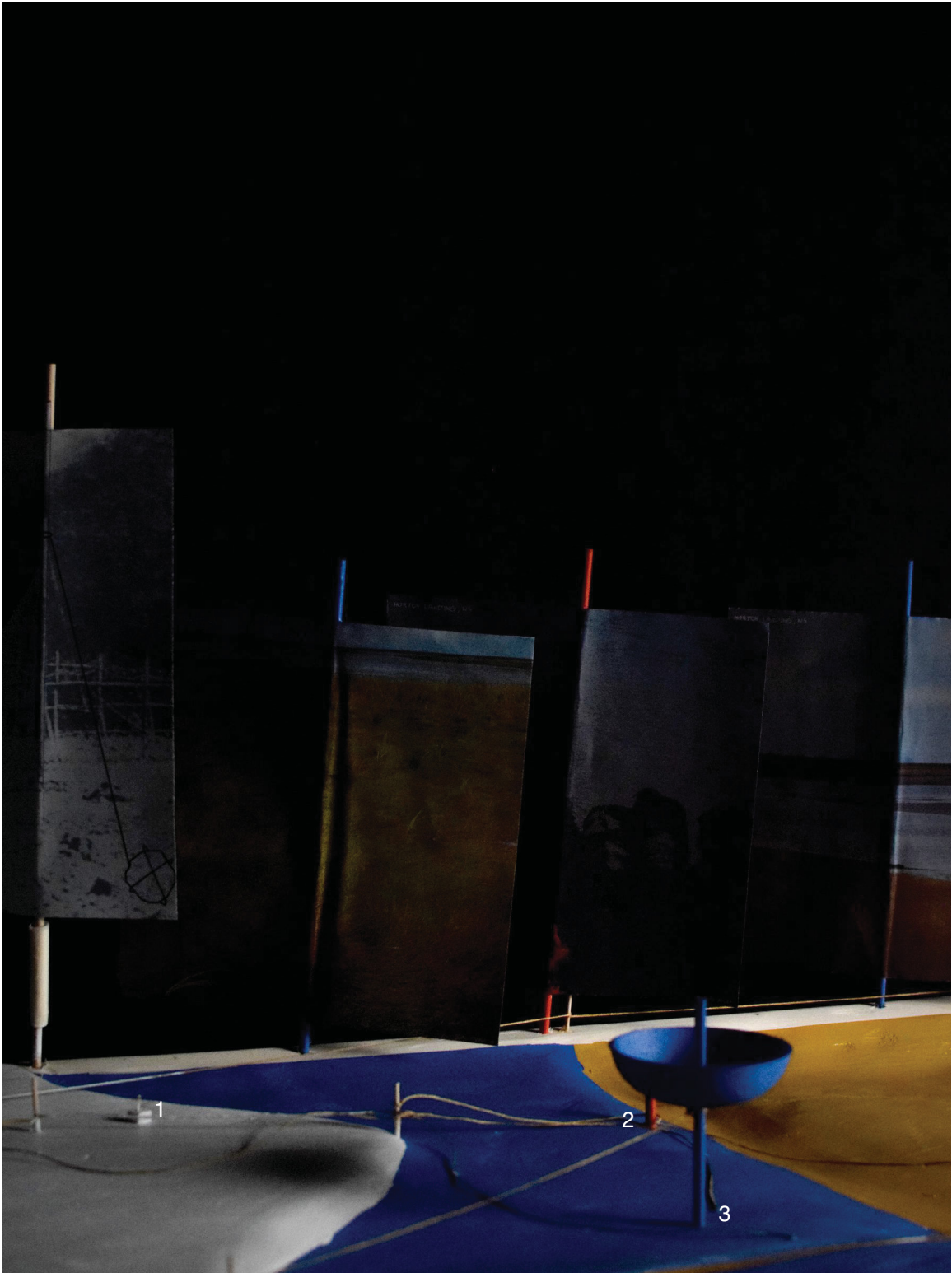
Vernacular atmospheres at Port Royal, reimagined as a grammar for drawing collective history and memory through first-hand experiences.



The analysis of Horton Landing and Port Royal culminated into a 1:500 analytic site model that was used as a stage for developing the ensemble; (1) existing dike / *aboiteau*.



The model shows the existing context (white). The strings represent two things. First, the incoming winds that typically come from the N, NW, SW, S. This information dictates the efficacy of the windmill blades. Second, the possible pilgrim's path as they meander along the witnessing grounds. The blue represents the intervention with the salt marshes and the yellow, the intervention with the mudflats: one about culture and one about faith; (1) location of the *Walled Garden*, (2) location of the *Sinking Chapel*.



Working with the site through photography and physical model-making, a position was developed that the ensemble — the witnessing grounds below — is like a departure from the real world (white) into a dream world (blues, reds, and yellows) where meaning is available through movement in space; (1) existing Deportation Cross, (2) existing ruined wharf, (3) location of the *Walled Garden*.



(1) pinch-point, where one decides to descend to the *witnessing grounds* below, (2) existing channel from an existing *aboiteau*, (3) the intent is to drain the *walled garden* into the existing channel, as an indirect way of unifying it with the site.

judgement that I want to suggest that this capacity could be named our sixth sense” (Pallasmaa and Zambelli 2020, 34).

Therefore, this thesis sees “atmospheric judgement” as an organizing element around which the design process can take place. In other words, this thesis uses atmosphere as a grammar for existential perception.

Bayou Teche, Louisiana

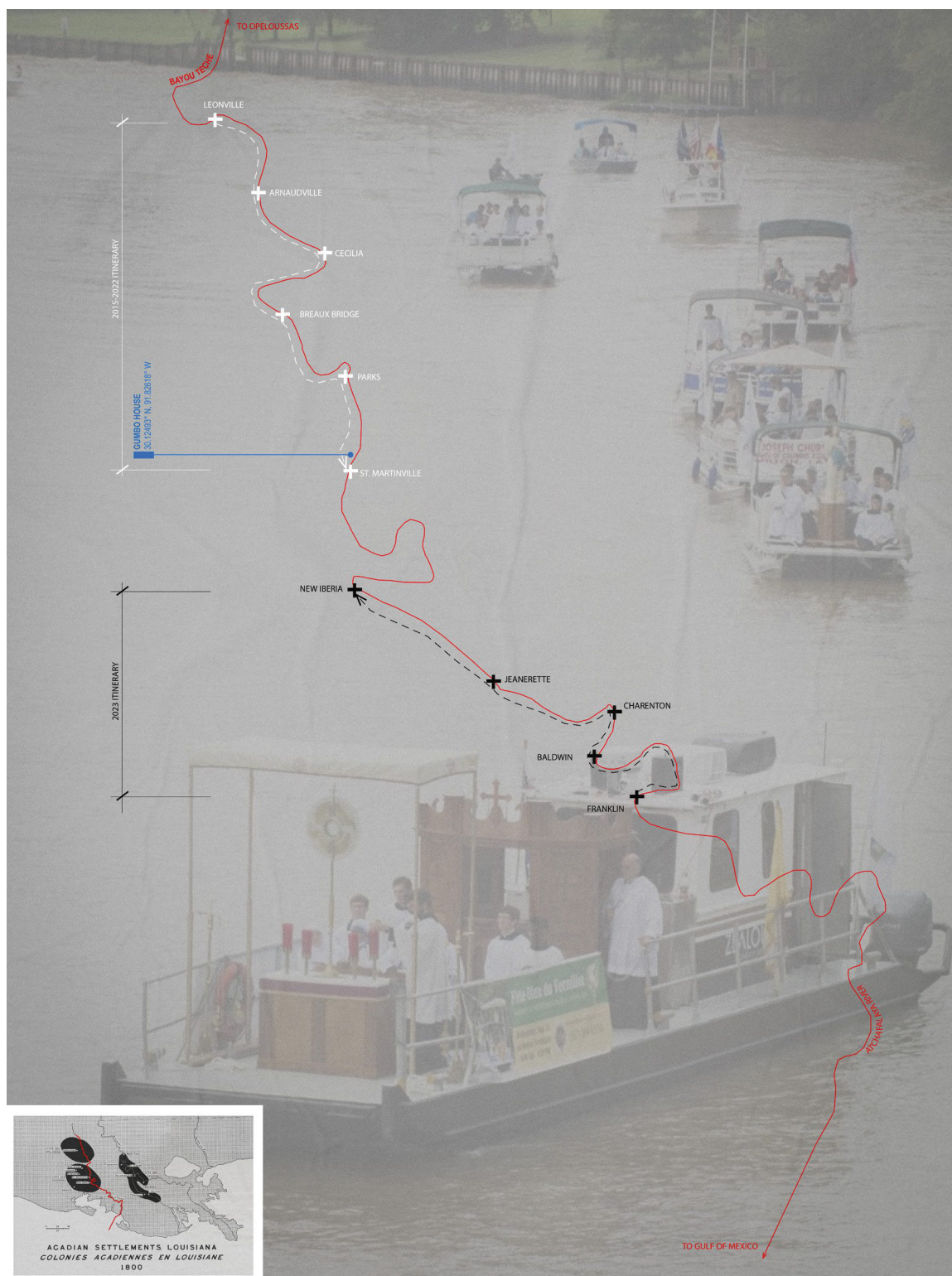
The second testing ground is Bayou Teche, Louisiana. It is the route that the Acadians took some 200 years ago when they first arrive in the south. What is interesting about the bayou landscape is how it is being used. Every year, the descendants, now called Cajun people, partake on a boat pilgrimage, retracing their ancestors’ journey. Along the way, they stop in each parish in various towns to recite the Holy Rosary and bless the Holy Eucharist, marking each stop with reverence and tradition.

Additionally, every year, the bayou hosts kayak races. One of the races is the Tour du Teche 135, an annual race of kayaks and canoes along the entire length of Bayou Teche. This race draws participants and spectators from the local community and beyond.

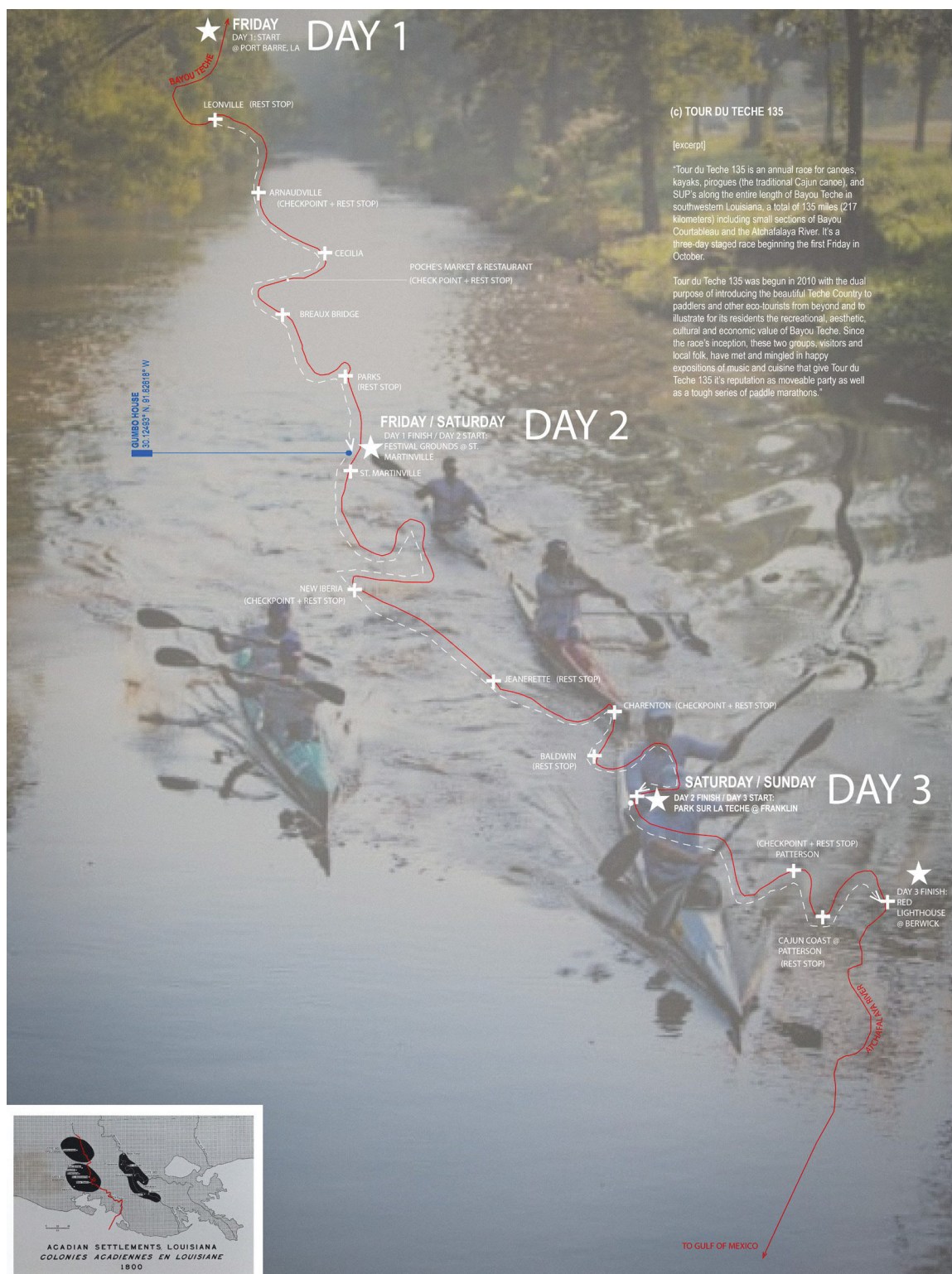
The bayou, therefore, is a particular landscape that witnesses the *past* and the *present*: the pilgrimage and the race. This thesis’ assessment of Bayou Teche is that it does not require another sacred event. Instead, it might benefit from a profane architecture that simply complements the existing events: a subtle addition to the bayou landscape.



The blue door at Port Royal is reimagined as a fundamental part of the “profane” vocabulary.



Mapping of the annual boat pilgrimage itinerary at Bayou Teche in relation to the *Gumbo House* (blue) (base map from Leblanc 1967; base image from New Liturgical Movement 2023).



Mapping of the annual kayak race itinerary at Bayou Teche in relation to the *Gumbo House* (blue) (base map from Leblanc 1967; base image from Port Barre Boat Launch 2023; excerpt from Tour du Teche 135 Race, n.d.)



By mapping the Tour Du Teche 135 and the boat pilgrimage, an optimal spot for the *Gumbo House* was selected. This is due to three main reasons: firstly, this area (indicated by a dashed line) is near the pilgrimage's final stop (1), providing an opportunity for people to gather, unwind, and enjoy a meal together after a long day of sacred practices; secondly, this location serves as a tenting ground (2) during kayak races; thirdly, its close proximity to St. John's restaurant (3), a renowned establishment in St. Martinville, reinforces the concept of the *Gumbo House* as an informal outdoor kitchen. Thus, this site plan diagram effectively demonstrates how the *Gumbo House* is strategically positioned and anchored by the three existing buildings/events, as indicated in black poche (map of St. John's restaurant from Google Earth 2023b).

Chapter 4: Testing (Methodology)

As a method, Horton Landing and Bayou Teche were synthesized through Tim Ingold's concept of *Thinking Through Making*, emphasizing the importance of tactile experiences in shaping our understanding of the world.

Physical model-making, hand-drawing, and photography were used as forms of direct engagements, attempting to *witness* what is and what could be. In his book *Making*, Ingold argues that the "hand that tells is also one that feels and draws" (Ingold 2013, 125). This assertion encapsulates that the pursuit of meaning can be linked with direct engagements. In other words, the more we actively involve ourselves in doing — whether it is drawing, crafting, or making — the deeper our understanding of the subject becomes. This concept implies that drawing and making by hand are active forms of listening, using our body as the locus of perception. When we create something, we are not just representing it visually; we are also engaging with it tactilely, emotionally, and intuitively. In a way, we *witness* the work in real-time. Through this process of *witnessing*, often without our conscious awareness, we subtly reshape and reimagine the significance of whatever we are making, intertwining our individual experiences with empirical data.

In other words, *Thinking Through Making* is a method of directly participating with the work and the world around us, listening to their stories, and re-telling them through the language of creation.

Certainly, this method is not foolproof and can sometimes result in errors and biased interpretations. However, it is not entirely devoid of merit to suggest that we can gain an



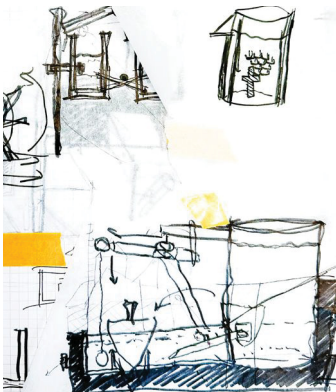
Thinking, dreaming and extracting meaning through making; model of the *found-objects* arranged in a particular way.



Little antique shop at Port Royal.



Found-objects bought from the little antique shop at Port Royal.



Sketch done in-collaboration with Max Brown (B1 student), attempting to reimagine the *found-objects*.

existential understanding of what is and what could be by simply immersing ourselves in the world of the work.

Found Objects

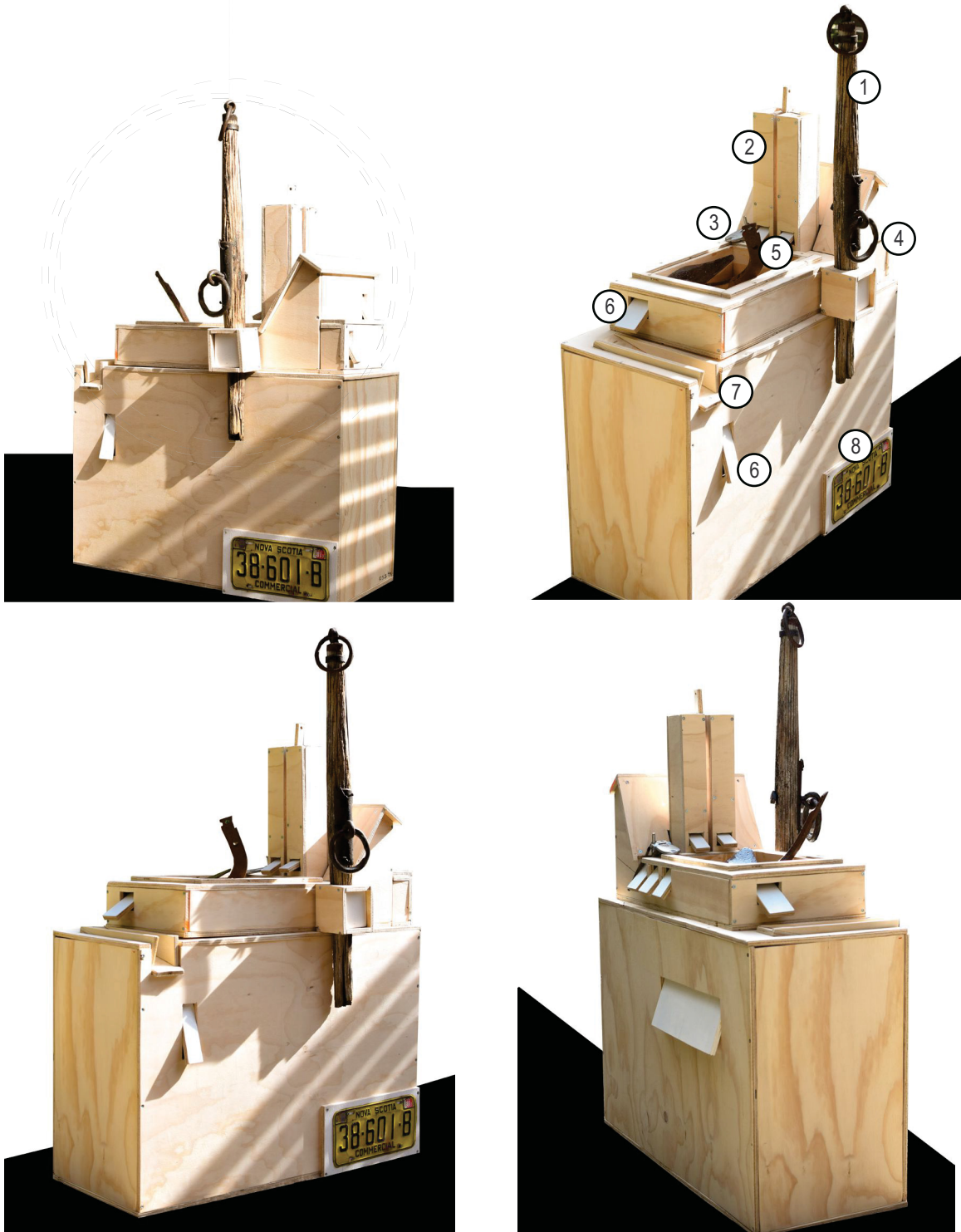
Ingold's method of *Thinking Through Making* is applied to the *found-objects* collected in Port Royal, Nova Scotia. Imagining that these objects have energies of time, place and meaning that are only accessible through intuitive making: that perhaps if arranged in a particular way, they can influence the design process. As indicated earlier, this thesis primarily operates in the realm of feelings, rather than facts. Working with the *found-objects*, therefore, is an ideal method for exercising feeling. The intent is to enter a state where the intellect is mostly at rest, and the intuition is mostly at play. This allows a conversation: a form of witnessing between the maker and the *found-objects*.

Three Modes Of Witnessing

Using the *found-objects* as a fuel, the method uses vernacular architecture for creating formal language and stoicism for proposing programmatic rituals. Together, they develop a mode of witnessing, a grammar, for reading key elements in the Acadian cultural landscape.

With The Sea (Mudflats)

This thesis reimagines the sea as a part of the grammar of the Acadian faith. The sea is full of potential and uncertainties. Among these uncertainties lies the enigma of the mudflats, which partly appears and disappears during the course of the day. The magic of the mudflats lies in their susceptibility and vulnerability to the advancing tides. This enhances their appeal, creating a sense of significance that is amplified by the limited window of time in which they are observable.



Sketch probing into the *found-objects*: (1) part of oxen harness, reimagined as a vernacular windmill; (2) two high tides / low tides as organizing elements; (3) flip phone, prompts two sites, NS and LA; (4) vernacular bump, typical in Acadian houses and farmhouses, reimagined as a totemic element; (5) part of oxen plow or part of farming spade, reimagined as an architecture that appear and disappear with the tides; (6) abstraction of the clapet/valve; the clapet is an integral part of aboiteau; (7) hollowed out log as a *walled garden*; (8) Nova Scotia license plate prompts a particular vernacular grammar.



Sketch attempting to imagine the potential of the *found-objects*; what if the windmill story tells the weight of the Acadian expulsion?



Early thoughts on the first mode of witnessing, using the vernacular grammar collected from Horton Landing and Port Royal. This sketch probes into an architecture that partly appear and disappear with the tides, with a totemic windmill that generates a certain feeling inside the space (base photo from Nova Scotia Archives 1930).

This underscores the importance of the present moment, which closely aligns with the teachings in stoic philosophy.

Overall, the mudflat prompts an architecture that harmonizes with and responds to the rhythm of the tides. It suggests that the sinking and reemerging of the architecture twice a day could be utilized to symbolize the witnessing of faith.

With The Land (Salt marshes)

This thesis reimagines the land as part of the grammar of the Acadian culture, of overcoming. Central to the land are the salt marshes, which, through collaborative efforts, hold the potential to be transformed into fertile grounds. This prompts an architecture that frames the salt marshes as the center of experience. It suggests that the fertility or degradation of the land hinges on our collective ability and duty to cooperate.

With The Bayou (Bayou Teche)

This thesis reimagines the bayou as a common ground where one can meet the *past* and the *present* and treat them just the same. In some sense, the bayou personifies the stability of the human spirit: how it is able to honor the past and yet allow a space to also celebrate the present. This relates to the stoic concept of stillness: that inner peace, in a way, is the wholehearted acceptance of the past and the reasonable approach of the present. In addition, it closely aligns with the earlier thoughts on stoic philosophy acting as a “shaft of space” that is able to host different events: the sacred and the profane, the pilgrimage and the kayak race.

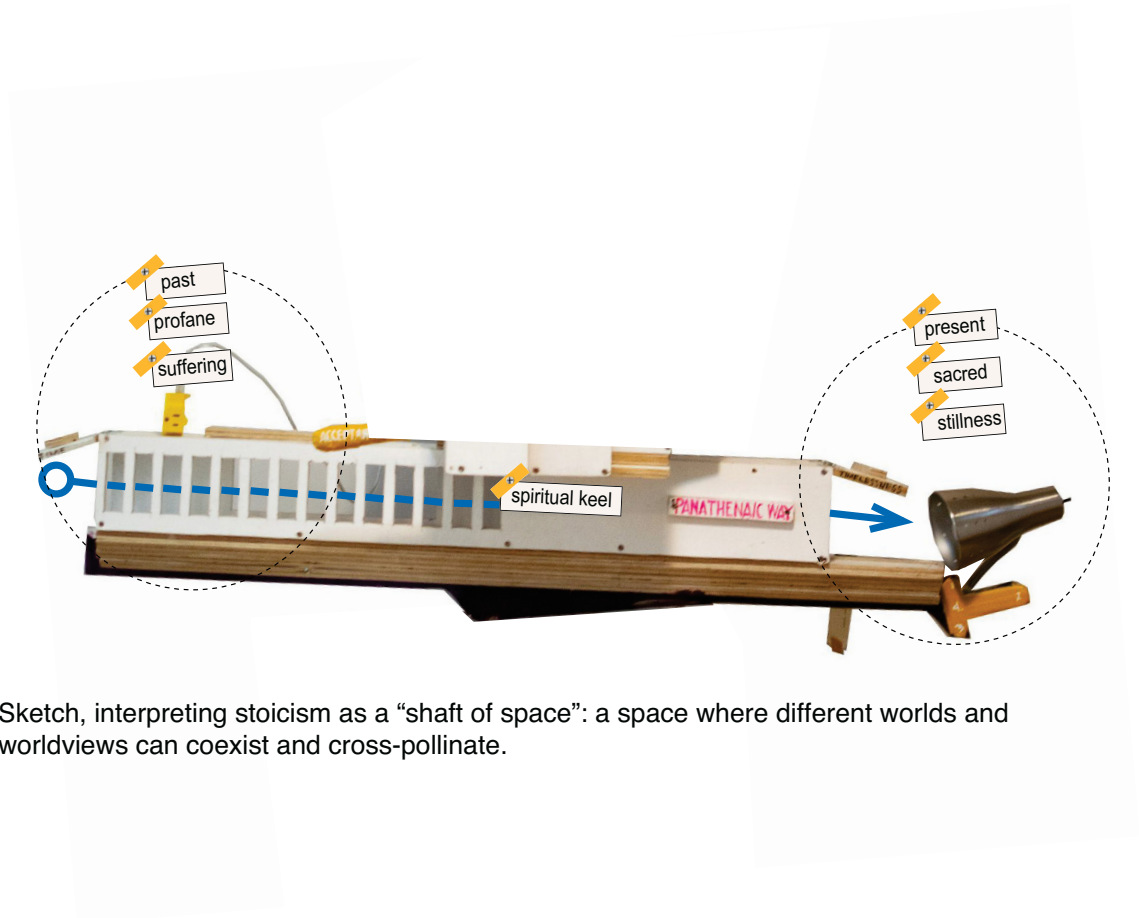
This thesis suggests that the bayou serves as a conduit for reconciling historical legacies with contemporary realities, treating them with equal reverence. This prompts an



Early thoughts on the second mode of witnessing, and how it relates to the third mode of witnessing through a magazine. This sketch probes into an architecture that highlights the salt marshes as the center of human experience (based photos from Nova Scotia Archives 1951; Le Moniteur Acadien 1867).

architecture that takes the backseat, secondary to the bayou and to the already existing phenomena that occurs therein.

In other words, this thesis argues that the *witnessing with the sea, with the land, and with the bayou* offer a dynamic strategy for probing into the depths and nuances of the Acadian cultural landscape.

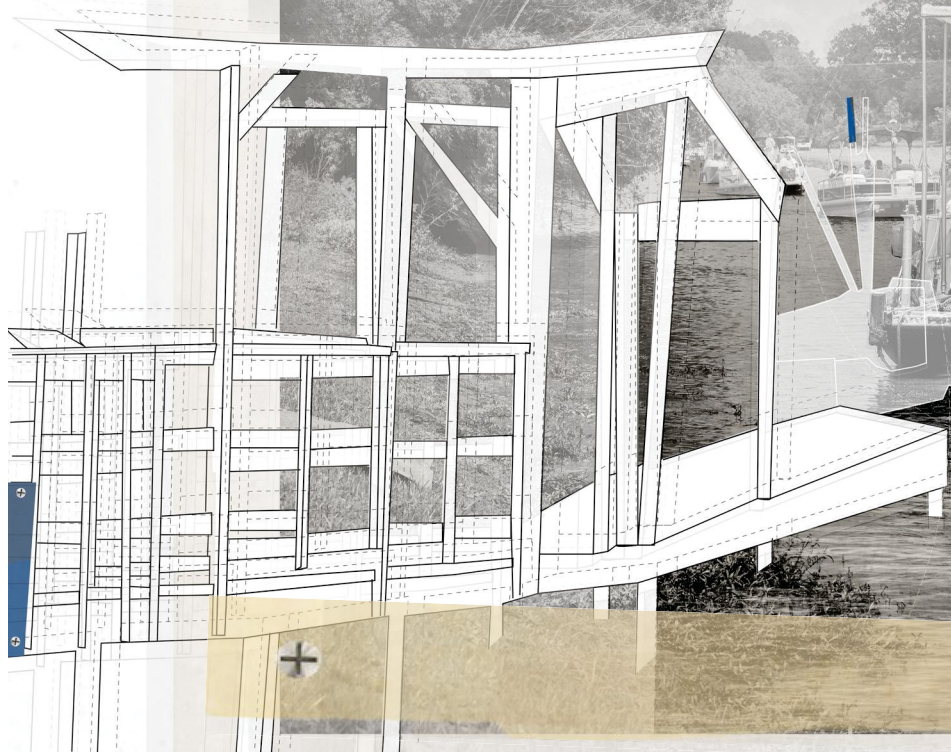


Sketch, interpreting stoicism as a “shaft of space”: a space where different worlds and worldviews can coexist and cross-pollinate.

MELHNSON'S BUHI HOUSE:

CAJUN FOOD + MUSIC

12pm-12am, Tuesdays to Saturdays



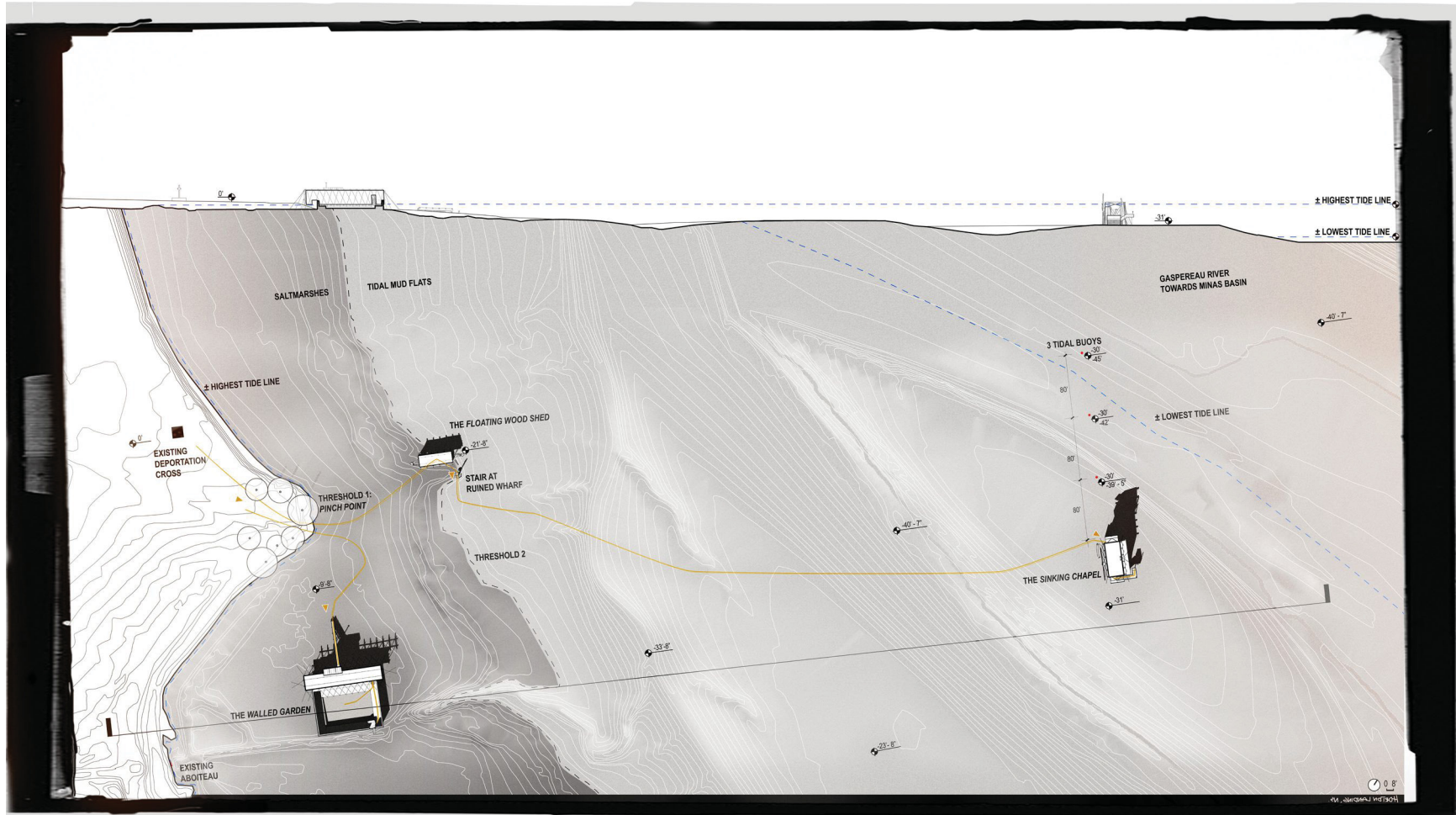
NOVA SCOTIA ZINES DURING CLOSING TIME

\$10

**SUNDAY
SERVICE
@ 9AM**

AGAD

Early sketch of the third mode of witnessing, probing into a potential program and its proximity to the land and the bayou. This sketch asks how the architecture supports the annual boat pilgrimage through food. It also asks how a magazine that is shipped from Nova Scotia can be part of the “profane” vocabulary (base photo from Lancon 2021).



Site plan and section diagram at Horton Landing, Nova Scotia, showing the *walled garden* and the *sinking chapel* in relation with the tides. This drawing probes into the architectural ensemble that *witnesses* the Acadian faith and culture. It includes supporting architectures that allow the *witnessing* possible (Lidar data from Province of Nova Scotia 2023).

Chapter 5: Three Modes of Witnessing (Design)

First Mode: The Sinking Chapel

Aimed at witnessing the vulnerability of the Acadian faith is the design of the *sinking chapel*. Located in the mudflats of Horton Landing, it is an architecture that partly appears and disappears with the tides, serving as an allegory to the vulnerability of the Acadian faith, and how it is subject to the ebb and flow of life's uncertainties.

The chapel uses vernacular architecture for crafting form and stoic philosophy for orchestrating rituals.

Structural Redundancy

The form of the chapel echoes the structural redundancy of the vernacular fishing weirs at Minas Basin. Tension ropes support the 30 foot roundwoods that are staked and anchored on the ocean floor. For additional structural support, basic cross-bracing are placed with varying lengths. This includes a 1x3 screen-wall, spaced 5/8 inch apart, which allows varying degrees of light and shadow to permeate the space. This structural redundancy follows an 8 feet grid, which indirectly reflects the 8 year deportation policy of the expulsion.

Wrecking Ball and Floating Stair

The experience in the chapel centers on the duality of faith. Meaning that inevitable suffering is unfortunately integral to the promise of stillness. This experience is achieved through the suspended concrete wrecking ball as the weight of the expulsion, and the floating steel as the slow ascent towards



Sketches on how to create a consistent structural grammar (base photo from Mcconnery n.d.)



Testing the *grammar* derived from the vernacular and stoicism to depict the two sides of faith: suffering (suspended wrecking ball) and the promise of stillness (stair and kneeler beyond); tidal buoy in the foreground.



Sketches on how to create a consistent structural grammar, based on the vernacular fishing weirs in Minas Basin, Bay of Fundy.



Sketch of a grammar derived from vernacular architecture (atmosphere) and stoicism (ritual) to depict the Acadian faith; the granite base is a *found-object* from Horton Landing, NS.



The roundwood cross-bracing eliminates the need for structural support from the screen-wall, creating an opening through which the yellow light can travel and project onto the veil.



The windmill bump, housing the yellow light, the operable fire pit, and the windmill.



Sketch of the veil manifesting the invisible wind through sound, while also serving as a canvas for the expression of faith.

inner peace. It implements the classic architectural move, compression and release.

Windmill Bump

The windmill bump is a reimagination of the vernacular bump, which is typical in Acadian houses and farmhouses. As a cast-in-place concrete mass, this windmill bump acts as a totemic figure. Its presence not only grounds the space but also supports the windmill axel which allows the operation of the wrecking ball. The inconsistent movement of the suspended wrecking ball, which depends on how the windmill witnesses the tides and the wind, amplifies the sense of uncertainty inside the space. It is a deception of perception, as if the gravity of the past emanates from above.

The Veil

The partly wet, partly dry, semi-translucent veil does three things. First it uses sound as a way of manifesting the presence or absence of the invisible wind. Second it serves as a canvas for the expression of faith: the yellow light. Positioned deliberately along the northeast side of the chapel, and in contrast to the floor-to-ceiling screen wall on the southeast side, is an 8-foot tall 1x3 screen wall. This allows the light to travel from the yellow stained window into the veil. Third is it functions as a lantern from beyond. Whenever it glows, it symbolizes the collective effort of individuals coming together to ensure the continual illumination of the yellow light.

Yellow Light

As a vernacular atmosphere, derived all the way back from Port Royal, the yellow light is the organizing element, the



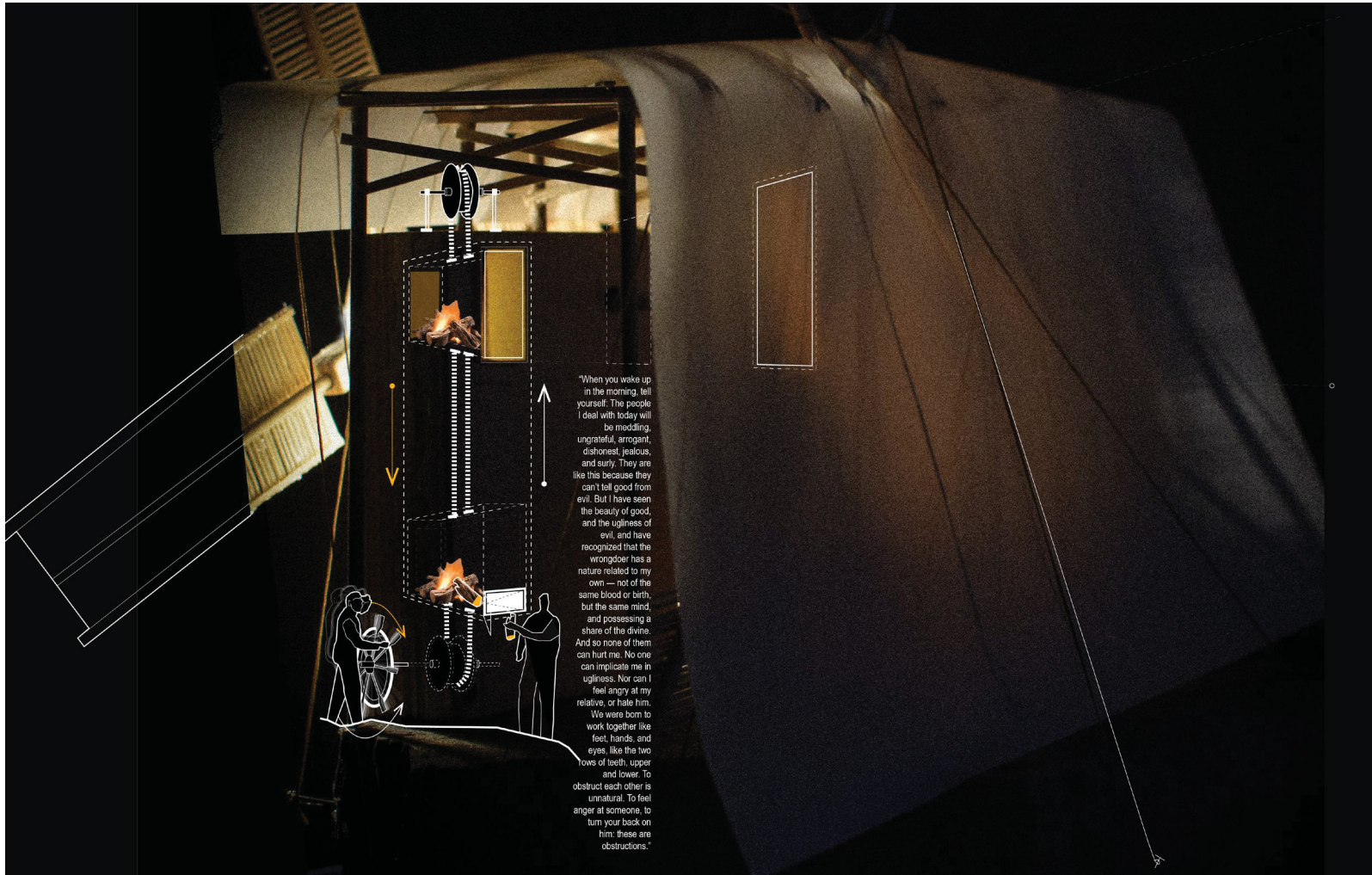
All of the design components function in service of the yellow light.

hearth, around which the design of the chapel takes place. As a symbol of the Acadian faith, the yellow light is the nucleus of the chapel. The design involves an operable fire pit that can be steered down and loaded with firewood. This ritual is designed for at least two people: ideally, an Acadian pilgrim, and a non-Acadian. One steering and one loading the firewood through a small door. This fire pit is then steered up, and the fire within projects itself onto a yellow stained window, which then travels onto the veil. Therefore, the yellow light it creates is partly nature, that is sun, and partly nurture, that is man. This suggests that the cooperation amongst ourselves has the capacity to generate and sustain the *light*. In short, when the chapel glows, it is a testament that magic arises when people of different worldviews set aside their differences to perform a singular act.

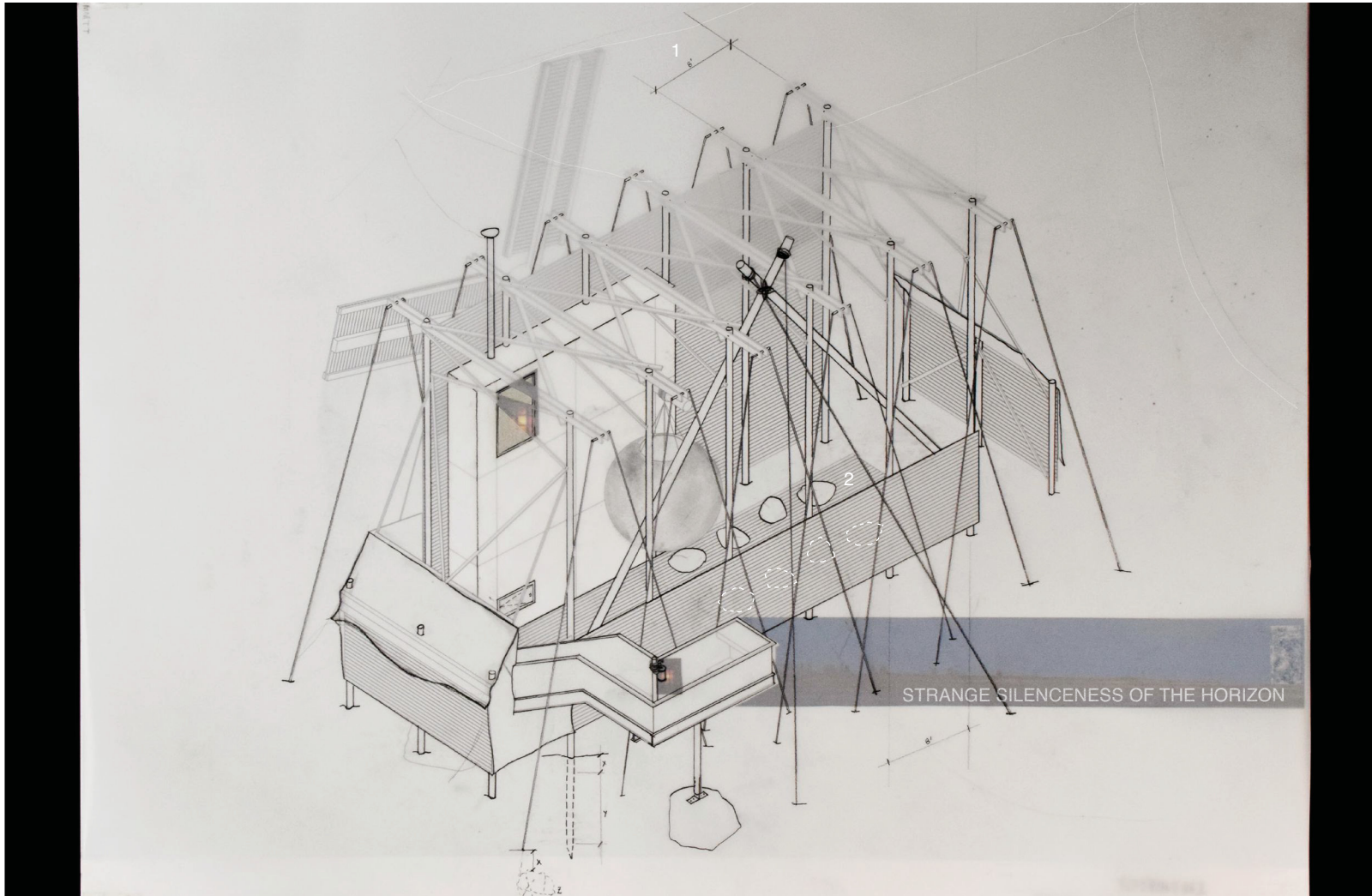
To enhance this experience, there exists the looming presence of the wrecking ball just above the fire pit door, always moving and always posing danger: an obstacle that must be overcome to ignite the fire.



Sketch of the yellow light projecting on the veil.



Sketch of an operable fit pit: an invitation for Acadians and non-Acadians to work together to keep the yellow light lit (excerpt from Aurelius and Robertson 2020, 15).



At the stair landing above is a wooden kneeler. Located at the northeast side of the chapel, this kneeler is hidden from the shoreline, offering an invitation to quietly practice faith or simply look at the horizon beyond; (1) 8-foot structural redundancy, (2) 8 rocks as pews.

The Floating Wood Shed

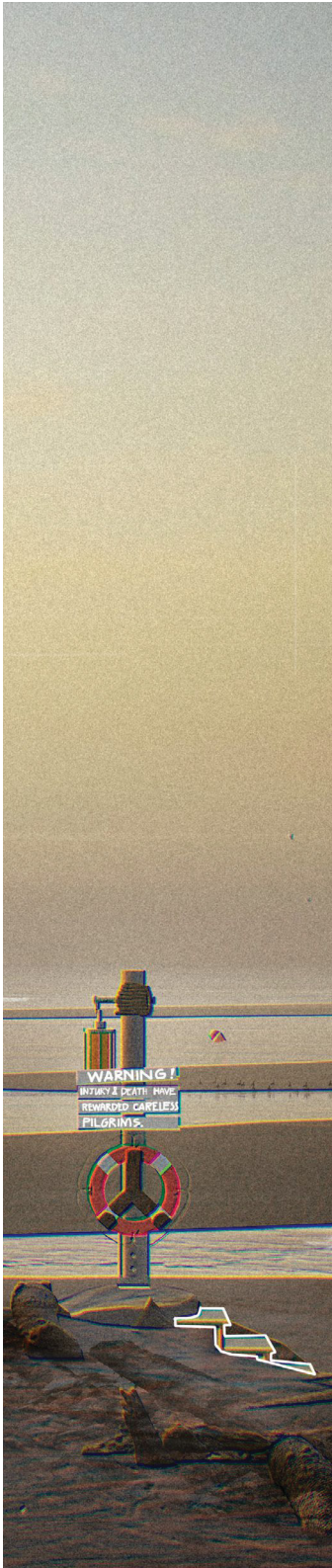
The floating wood shed is located and anchored close to the existing ruined wharf, where a stair is delicately carved into the wharf-fabric. This shed is constructed similar to how a floating dock is framed and constructed, using heavy duty polyethylene plastic floats for buoyancy during high tides and stability during low tides. The shed is anchored on its east and west wings to ensure that it will not drift overtime, while its oversized length tension ropes allow it to gracefully ascend and descend with the tides.

The shed follows the same grammar of the sinking chapel: 8 foot structural grid; roundwood posts; tension ropes; 2x4 screen wall that is spaced 5/8 inches apart.

Moreover, the shed has three components that are deemed useful to the pilgrims. First is a skiff, a small and light flat-bottomed boat usually used for shallow waters. Portaging the skiff to the chapel at low tide gives the pilgrim the chance to stay at high tide. Second is the pile of firewood. This is where the pilgrims get their wood before they descend down to the mudflats. This wood is used to either sustain or start the fire at the hearth of the chapel. It is the pilgrims task to ensure that the firewood is plentiful and secured. Third is a boot wall, where 3 rubber boots and 3 rain coats are hung dry. This wall is an invitation to the pilgrims to partially get undress and wear the *uniform* as a preparation and commitment to the pilgrimage that awaits.

Stair

The stair is an invitation to slowly descent to the world below. It is carved delicately in an existing ruined wharf. This architecture, in a way, gives the old wharf its new life. Close



Sketch of the stair delicately carved into the existing ruined wharf fabric.

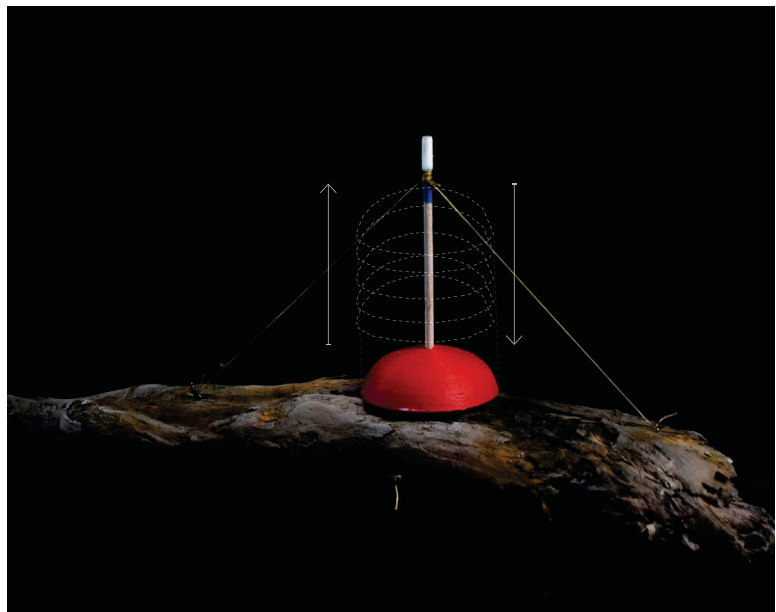


Sketch of the floating wood shed, anchored close to the existing ruined wharf; (1) bay for the skiff, (2) two bays for the firewood, (3) bay for the boot wall.

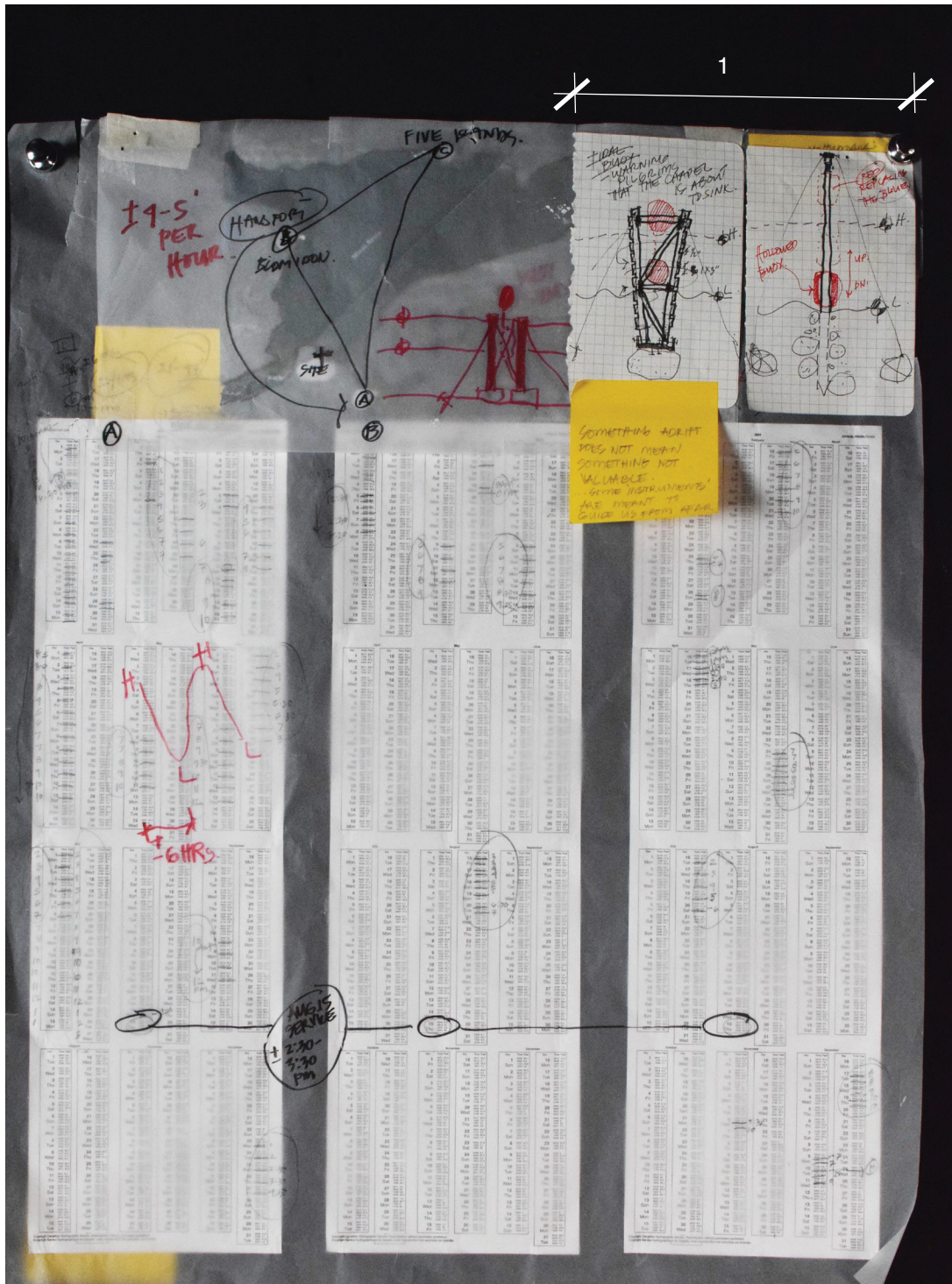
to the first stair thread is a roundwood post with a life ring, a gas lamp, and a warning for pilgrims that do not respect the tides. The gas lamp is used as an armour through the darkness for pilgrims visiting at dusk or dawn. It can also be used to start the fire at the hearth of the chapel.

Three Tidal Buoys

As a supporting architecture to the sinking chapel, three tidal buoys were designed and placed 80 feet apart to guide the pilgrims from afar. Earlier studies show that it is very difficult to anticipate the arrival and departure of the tides. As a result, a system of buoys were deployed to warn pilgrims that the chapel is about to sink. These recycled buoys has a hole in the middle that allow them to travel up and down on a roundwood post, depending on the height of the tides. Each post has blue cap, and the buoys are painted red. This means that when the blue is replaced with the red, it is time leave and walk back to the shore. It is a commonsensical way of alerting pilgrims that the tides are coming.



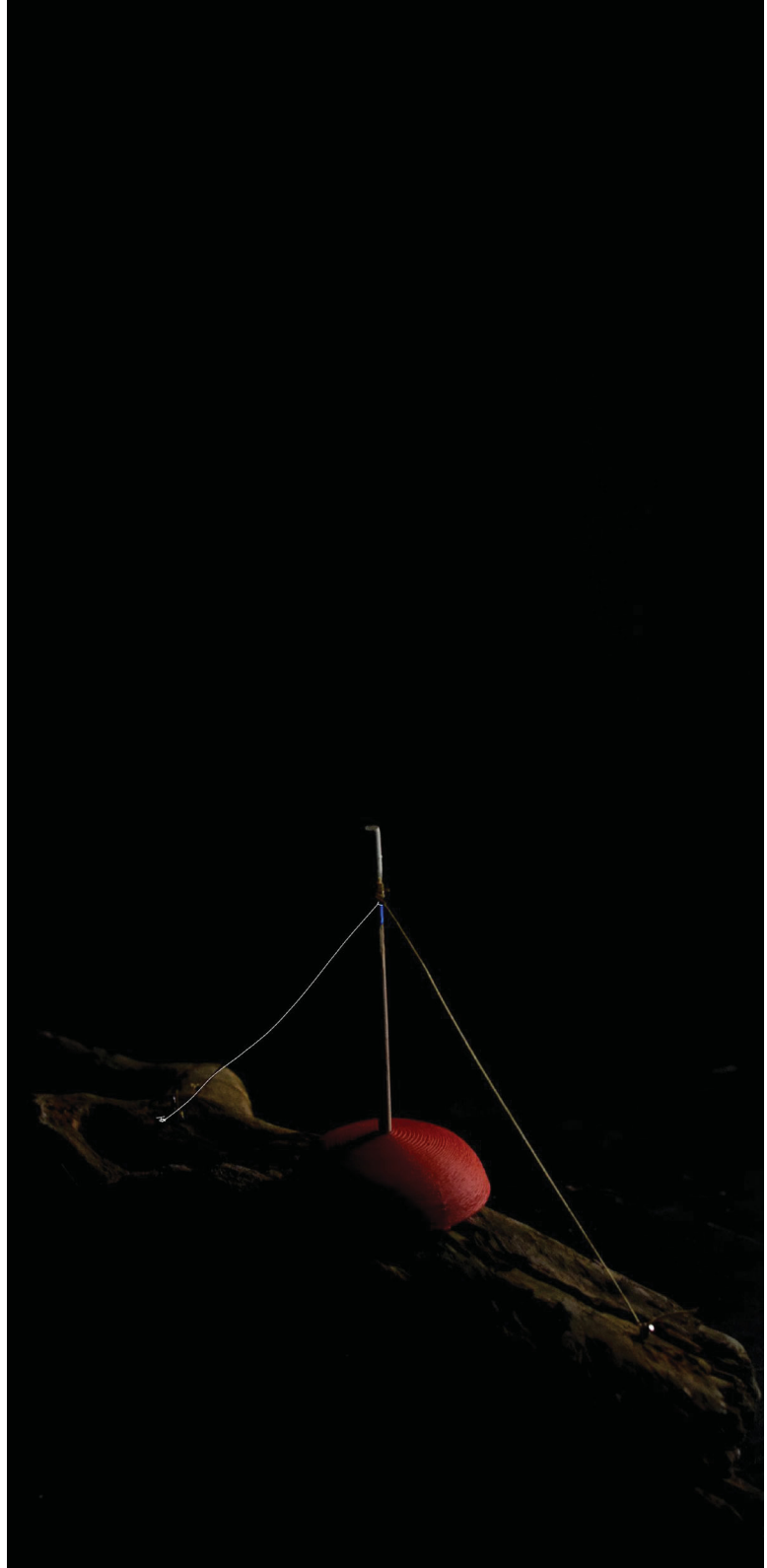
Sketch of the tidal buoy, probing into how it can adapt to the unpredictable behavior of the tides; the driftwood model base is a *found-object* from Horton Landing, NS.



Datas from three tidal stations (Hansport, Blomidon, and Five Islands) close to the Horton Landing site were used to anticipate the arrival and departure of the tides. What was understood was that the time of the lowest and the highest tides varies every day. This implies that it is very challenging to predict specific times when the *sinking chapel* can be visited; (1) early sketches probing how architecture can function as a sundial, indicating the times when the chapel is accessible or inaccessible, tide-dependent (tidal datas from the Government of Canada 2024).



Sketch of the tidal buoy at high tide. The idea is when the red replaces the blue, its time to leave the chapel.



Sketch of the tidal buoy at low tide.



Sketch of the three tidal buoys alerting the pilgrim to leave immediately.

Second Mode: The Walled Garden

Designed to witness the fertility of the land is the design of the *walled garden*, an allegory to the Acadian farming history. The main intent here is to emphasize that the land, the salt marsh, is the center of experience. The design aims at creating a common ground for us to come together and till the soil, transforming it into a shared space where we can see the fruits of our labor, collectively. Through this shared undertaking, we cultivate not only the land but also a sense of camaraderie.

The Pavillion

Sitting atop a concrete retaining wall, like a bird on a string, is the pavillion: a place of refuge when the tides draw near. It overlooks the garden below, serving as a common ground to witness the desalination process overtime. Visitors will see the evolution of the garden: how it slowly attract wildlife and plant species in a span of 2 to 3 years. The design of the pavillion is similar to the grammar of the sinking chapel, with the exception of the corten steel. Between the mud and the golden hue of the salt meadow grass, the materiality of the corten blends well with the land.



Sketch of the pavillion showing the 8-foot structural redundancy and cross-bracing.



The second mode of witnessing involves a pavilion designed to encourage informal gatherings and events, be it through music, art, or food. This sketch depicts an architectural variation within the grammar of the vernacular fishing weir.

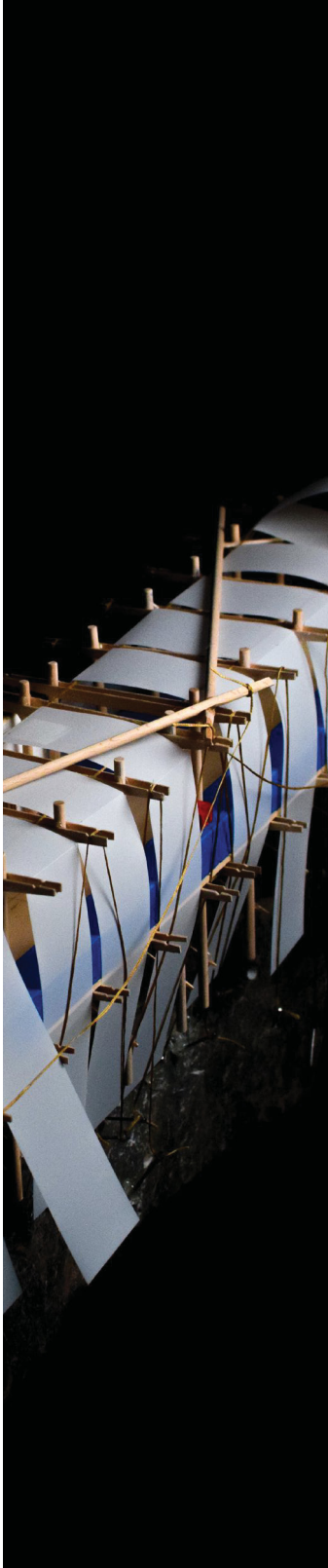


Sketch of the *walled garden* and its entry bridge, attempting to create a slow-walk: a feeling of anticipation.

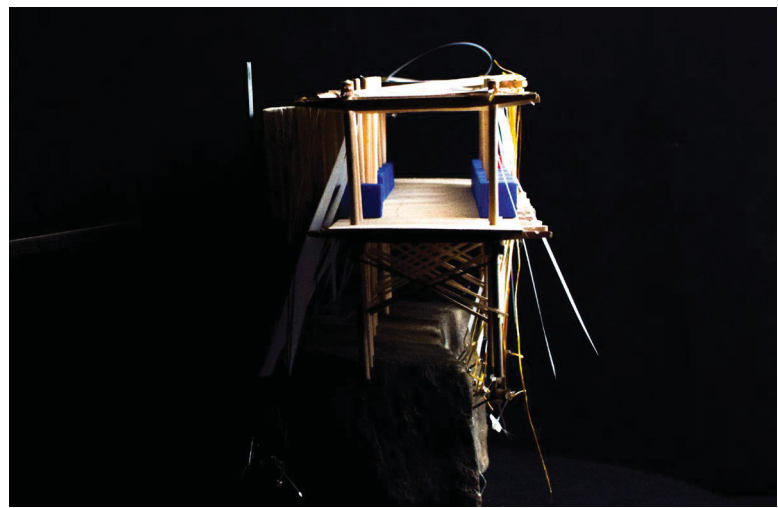
There are four design features of this pavillion.

First is the 60 foot long bridge: a slow ascent to a higher and safer ground. Acting as an elongated portal, the procession to the pavillion fosters a feeling of anticipation.

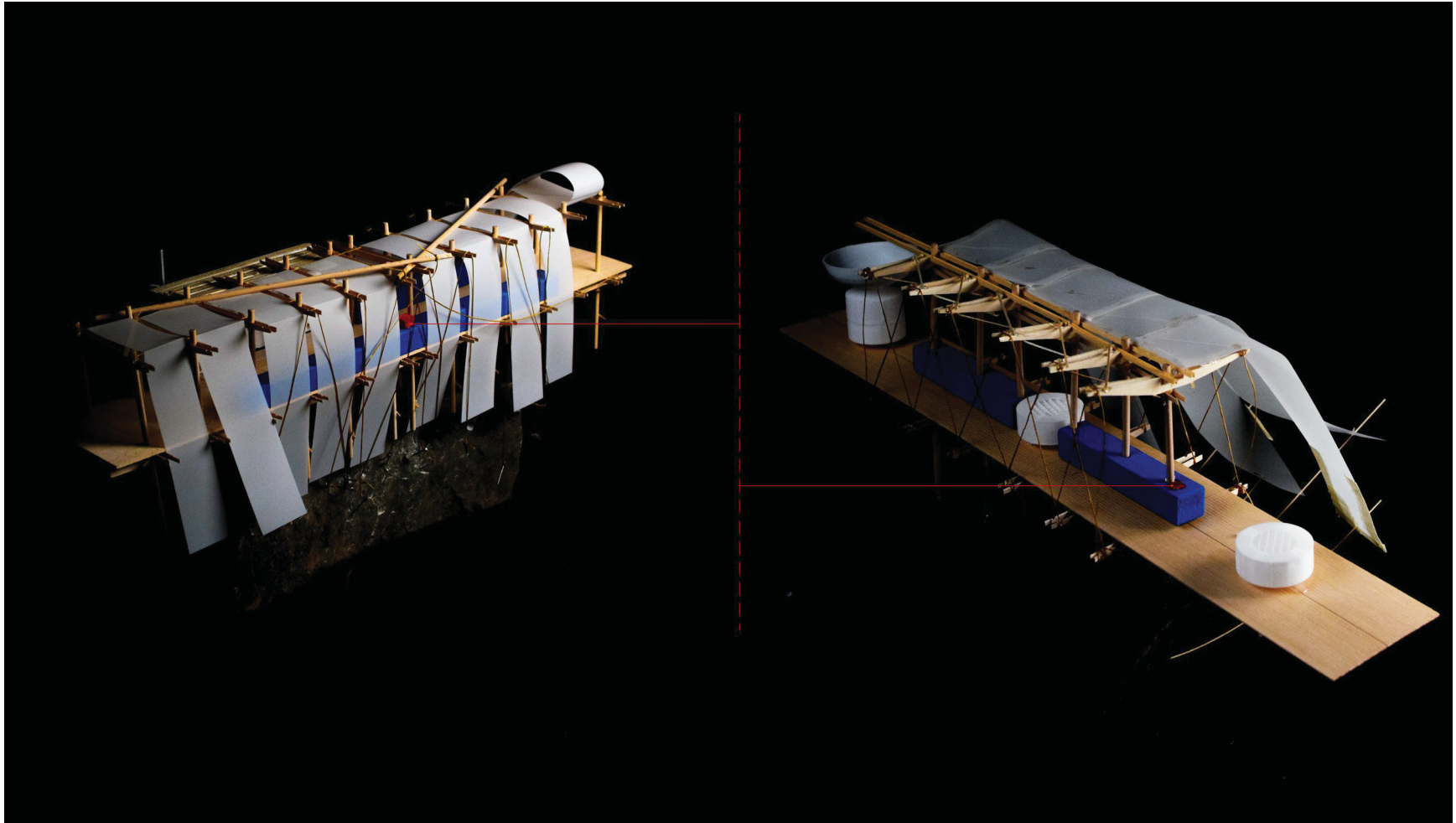
Second is the two folded corten tables situated on the north and south sides of the building, each spanning 8 structural bays. Underneath them are movable wooden chairs, inviting visitors to rearrange them to suit their needs. Atop the center of the southern table rests a 269-page *red book*, securely bound yet devoid of content. This *red book* serves as an open invitation for all visitors, whether Acadian or non-Acadian, to document their thoughts and experiences. Annually, in the month of August, the entries from this book can be gathered, published, and shipped to Bayou Teche, Louisiana in a form of a magazine. Those intrigued by this compilation can acquire a copy at the *gumbo house* during the yearly boat pilgrimage, providing some casual reading to go with their meal. In the spirit of the first acadian newspaper, the *Le Moniteur Acadien*, this *red book* acts as a link between different people in different places.



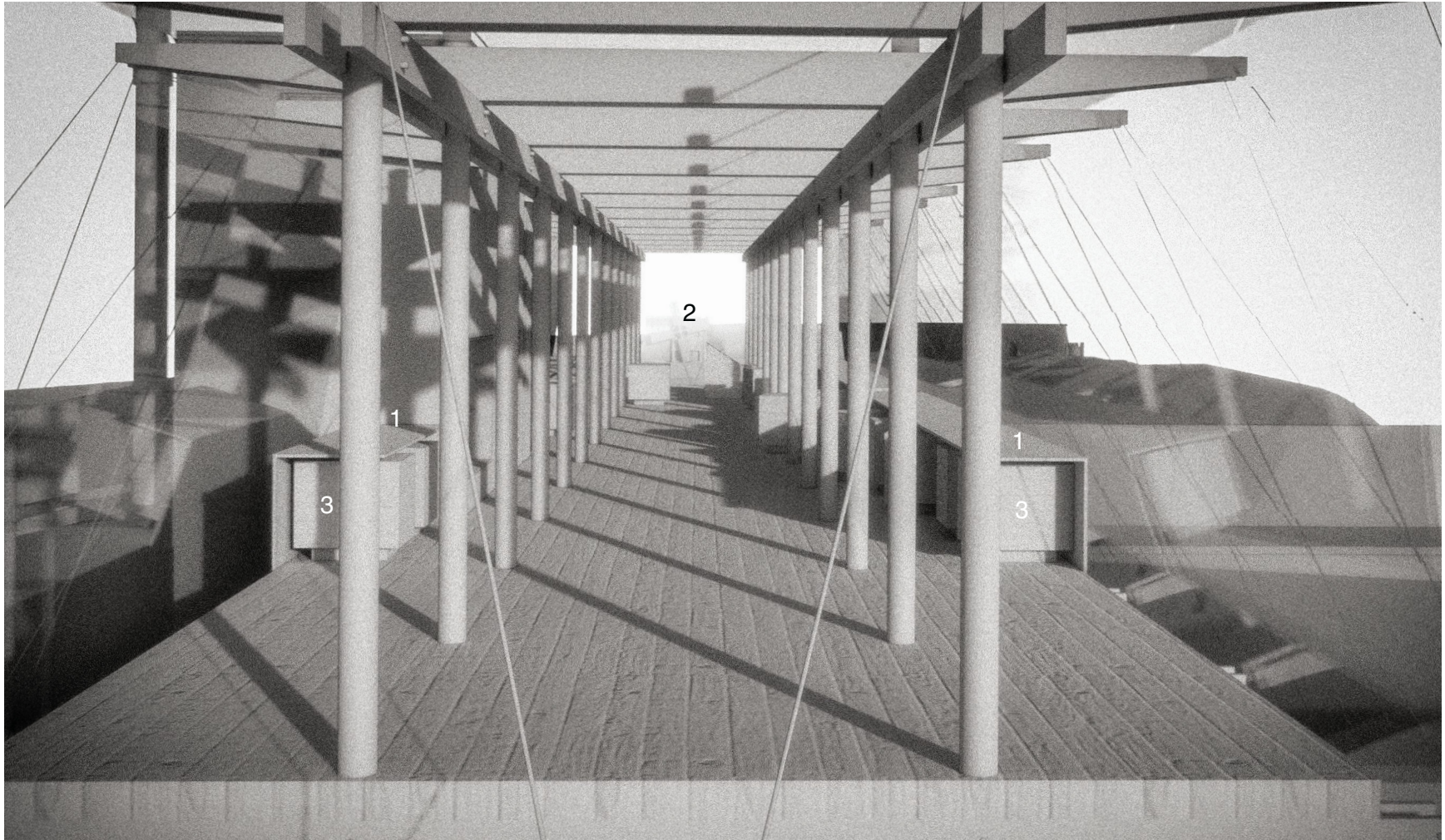
Sketch of the southern table (blue) with the *red book* at the center.



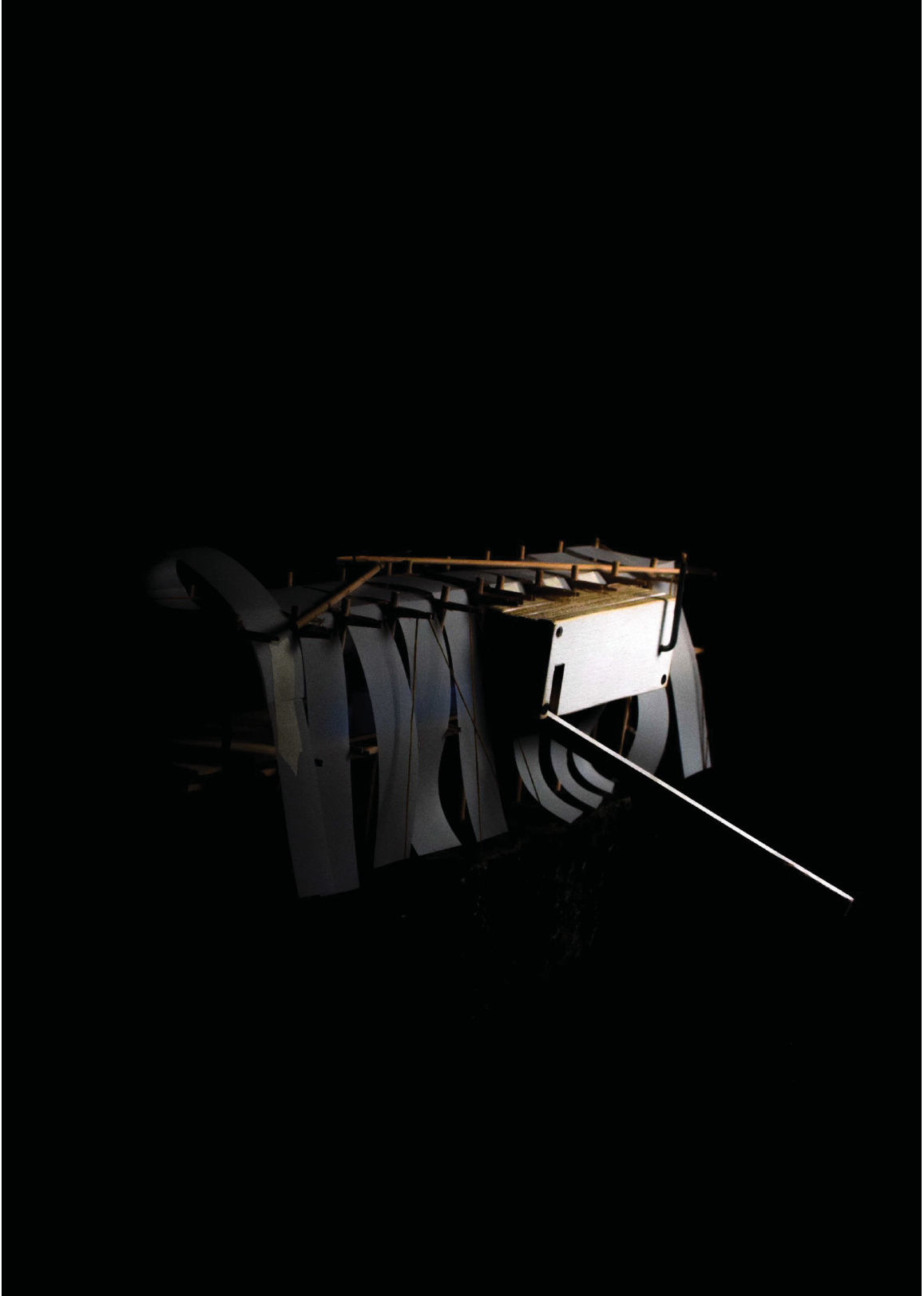
Sketch of the two tables on the northern and southern sides of the pavillion (blues); the granite base is a *found-object* from Horton Landing, NS.



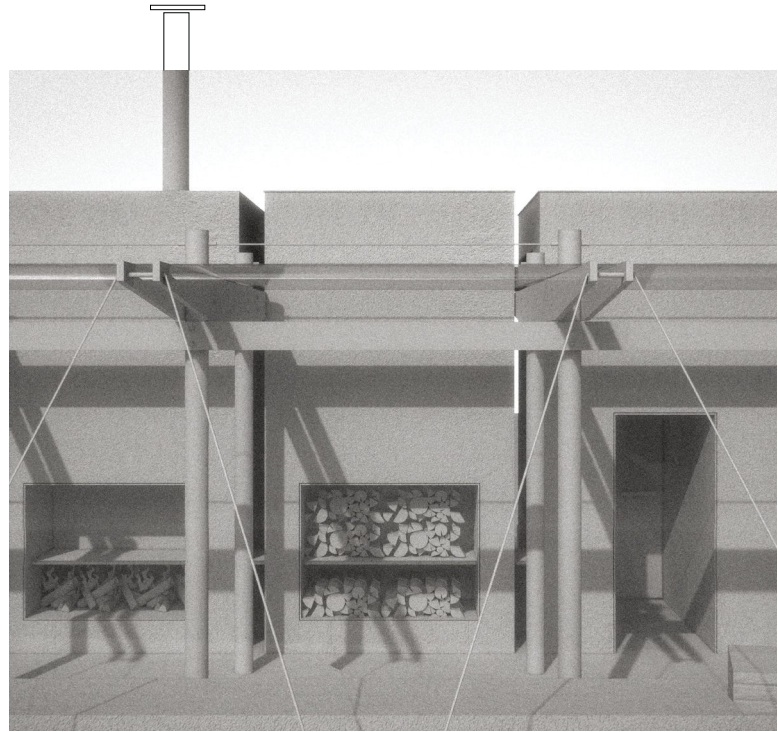
Sketch of the two modes of witnessing, the *walled garden* and the *gumbo house*, linked through the *red book*.



Sketch of the pavillion as part of the scheme of the walled garden; (1) folded corten tables, (2) sinking chapel beyond, (3) movable wooden chairs.



Sketch of the bridge and the totemic bump, housing the entry vestibule, fireplace, firewood, and a traditional Acadian fiddle.



Sketch of the “totemic bump”, housing the fireplace, the firewood, the entry vestibule, and a traditional Acadian fiddle.



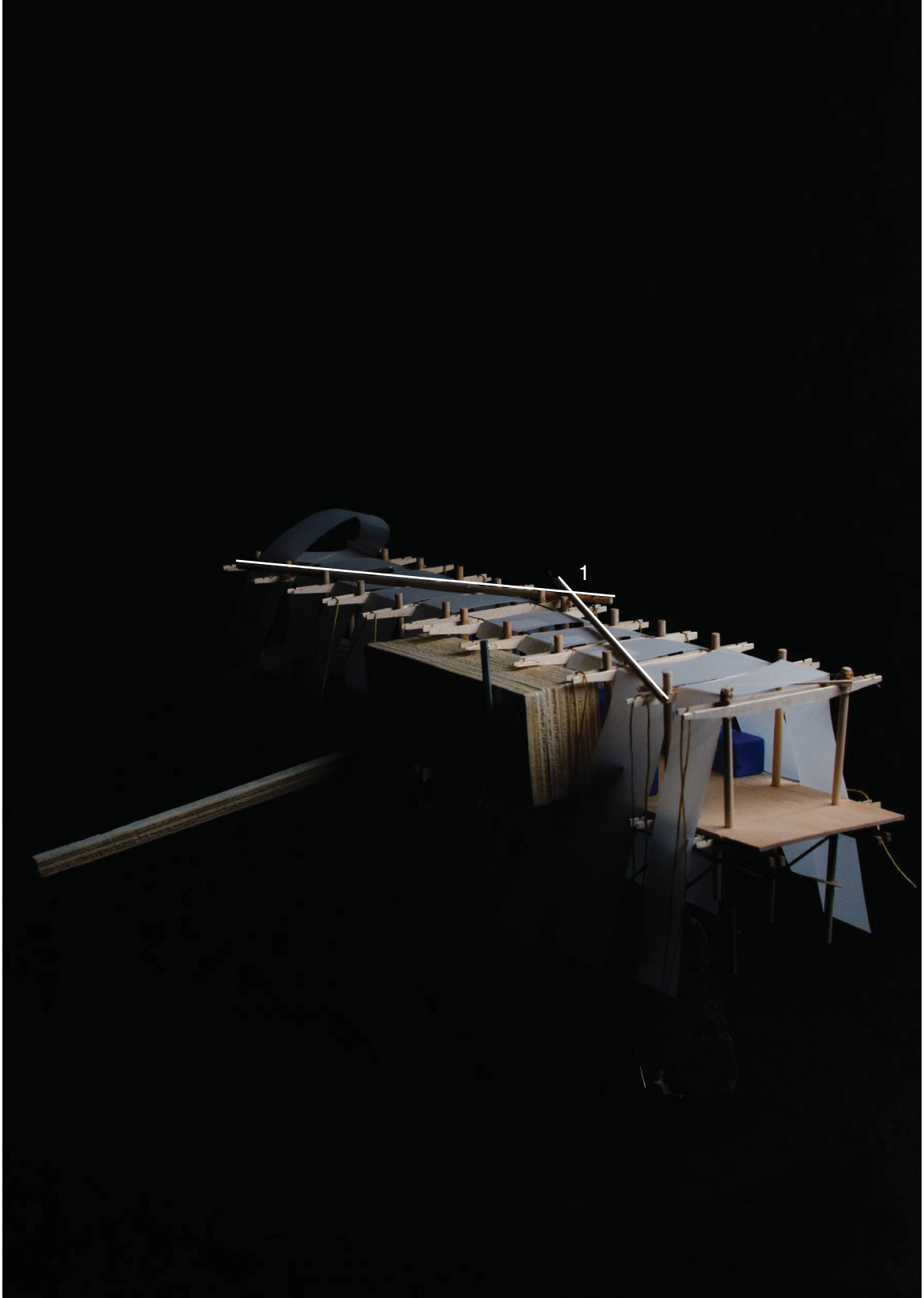
Sketch of the stair towards the *walled garden* below.

Third is the “totemic bump”, wrapped in corten steel, housing the entry vestibule, fireplace, firewood, and a traditional Acadian fiddle. This bump evokes a grammar similar to the “windmill bump” in the sinking chapel, both of which were derived from the vernacular bump typical in Acadian buildings. This corten bump serves as an informal invitation for events to occur, be it through food, music or art. Everytime there is an event and the fireplace is used, the candles are lit, and the music fills the air, the pavillion glows like a beacon in the field, signaling that at the end of the day, it is in our nature to gather as a united community under one roof.

Fourth is the corten stair towards the *walled garden* below. This serves as an intivation to directly interact with the garden and the new wilderness it has allowed and will continue to allow to grow.



Everytime there is an event and the fireplace is used, the candles are lit, and the music fills the air, the pavillion glows like a beacon in the field, signaling that at the end of the day, it is in our nature to gather as a united community under one roof; sketch of the *walled garden* at high tide; (1) pavillion, (2) concrete retaining wall, (3) eroding section of the wall, (4) *sinking chapel* beyond.



(1) The roundwood cross-bracing on the *walled garden*, in a way, is similar to the sinking chapel but happening in the horizontal dimension, indirectly implying the land.



(1) The roundwood cross-bracing on the *sinking chapel*, but happening in the vertical dimension, indirectly implying faith.

The Retaining Wall

There are two basic functions of the concrete retaining wall. Firstly, it is an abstraction of the Acadian dike. It protects the ground within from the rising tides, allowing the desalination process and soil fertility to occur. To make this possible, the garden is sloped towards a drain, allowing rainwater to run off and keep the area dry. In a way, it is similar to how the Acadians built their dikes and started growing crops of wheat, oats, barleys, among many others.

Secondly, the concrete retaining wall frames the garden below — the salt marshes — as the center of human experience.

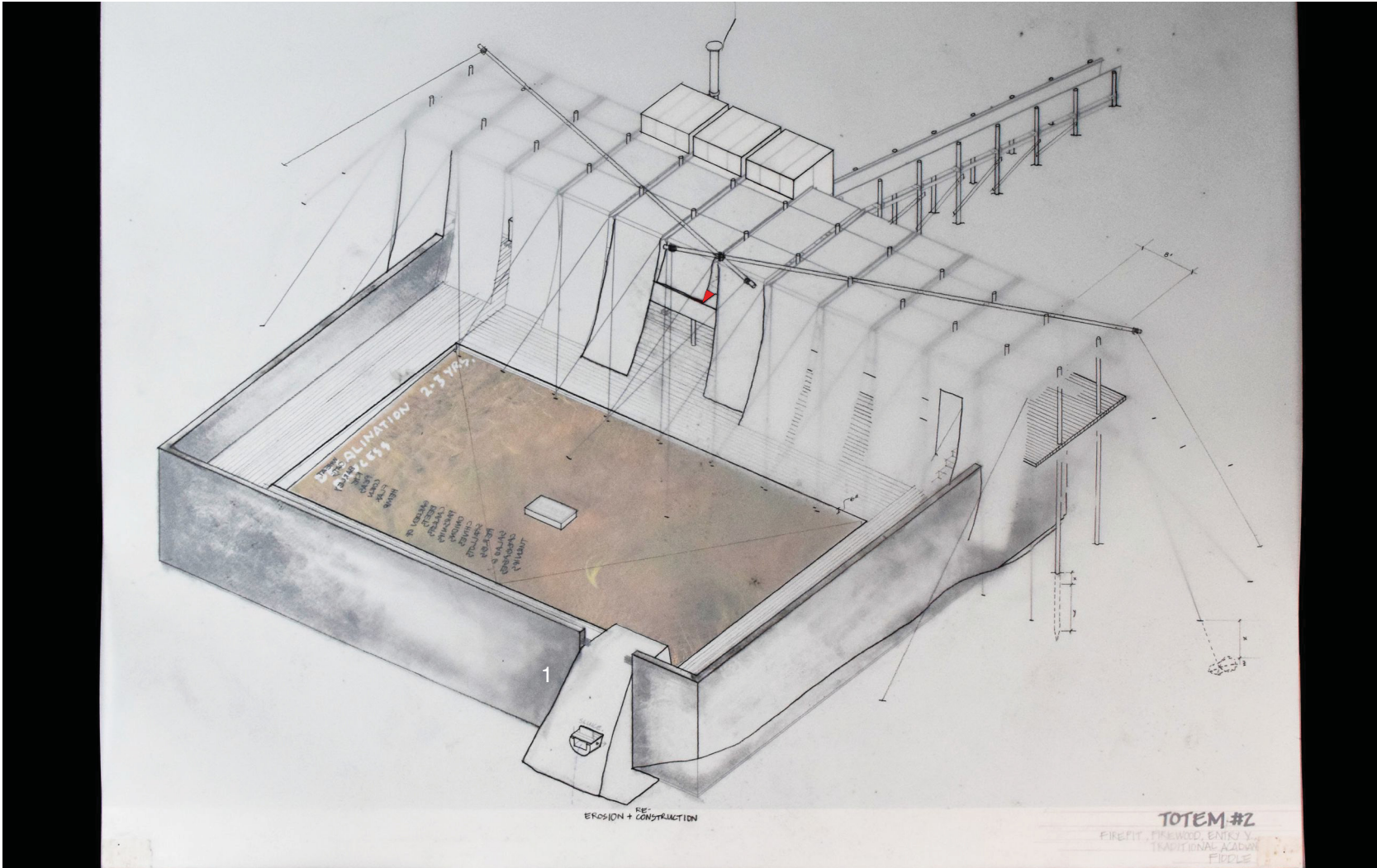
The Eroding Section Of The Wall

A small section of the retaining wall is designed to be unfinished. Instead of concrete, it is made of an Acadian dike designed to erode overtime. And erosion means flooding inside the garden. This is a daring provocation to all visitors, Acadians and non-Acadians, to set aside differences to ensure the maintenance, and if needed, the reconstruction of the dike: a ritual that teaches history through collective hands-on experience.

However, the choice of allowing the dike to erode and then replacing it with concrete, serves as a critique of human nature. It highlights our likelihood to favor expediency over meaningful and long-term collaboration.



Sketch of the eroding section of the retaining wall.



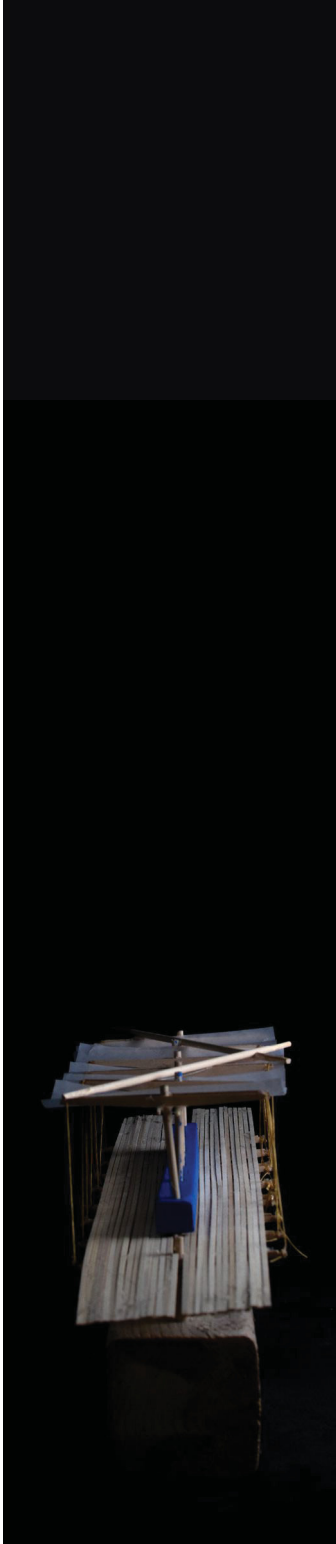
Sketch of the *walled garden* probing into how it maintains a consistent form while introducing a new ritual better suited for preserving culture; (1) eroding section of the wall, an Acadian dike (aboiteau).

Third Mode: The Gumbo House

The *gumbo house* is an informal outdoor kitchen elevated on concrete piers six feet above grade. Operating seasonally, starting on August 15 and ending on the first weekend of October, it is designed to annually support the sacred and the profane events in Bayou Teche, Louisiana, namely, the boat pilgrimage and kayak races. The grammar of the building is more or less similar to that in Horton Landing: a variation within a particular theme. Excluding the forty-foot entry bridge, the main pavillion spans seventeen structural bays, each eight feet on center.

Existing Oak Trees

In the bayou, especially during hot summer months, live oaks and bald cypress are typically filled with spanish moss. It is a phenomenon particular to this place: a vernacular grammar. The intent is to partly hid the building: to situate the *gumbo house* behind and around a patch of existing oak trees. This is to ensure that it remains neutral and does not compete with the existing events.



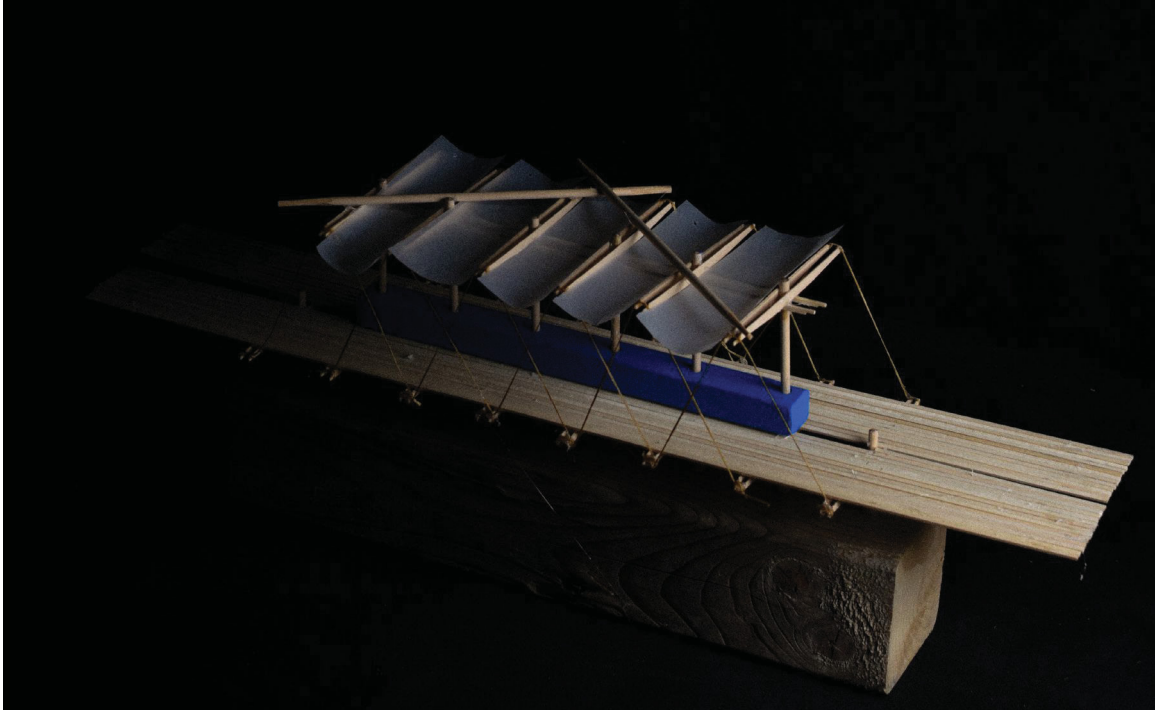
First iteration of the *gumbo house*, testing a variation within a particular grammar derived all the way from Nova Scotia.



Early sketch of the *gumbo house* in proximity to the existing oak trees.



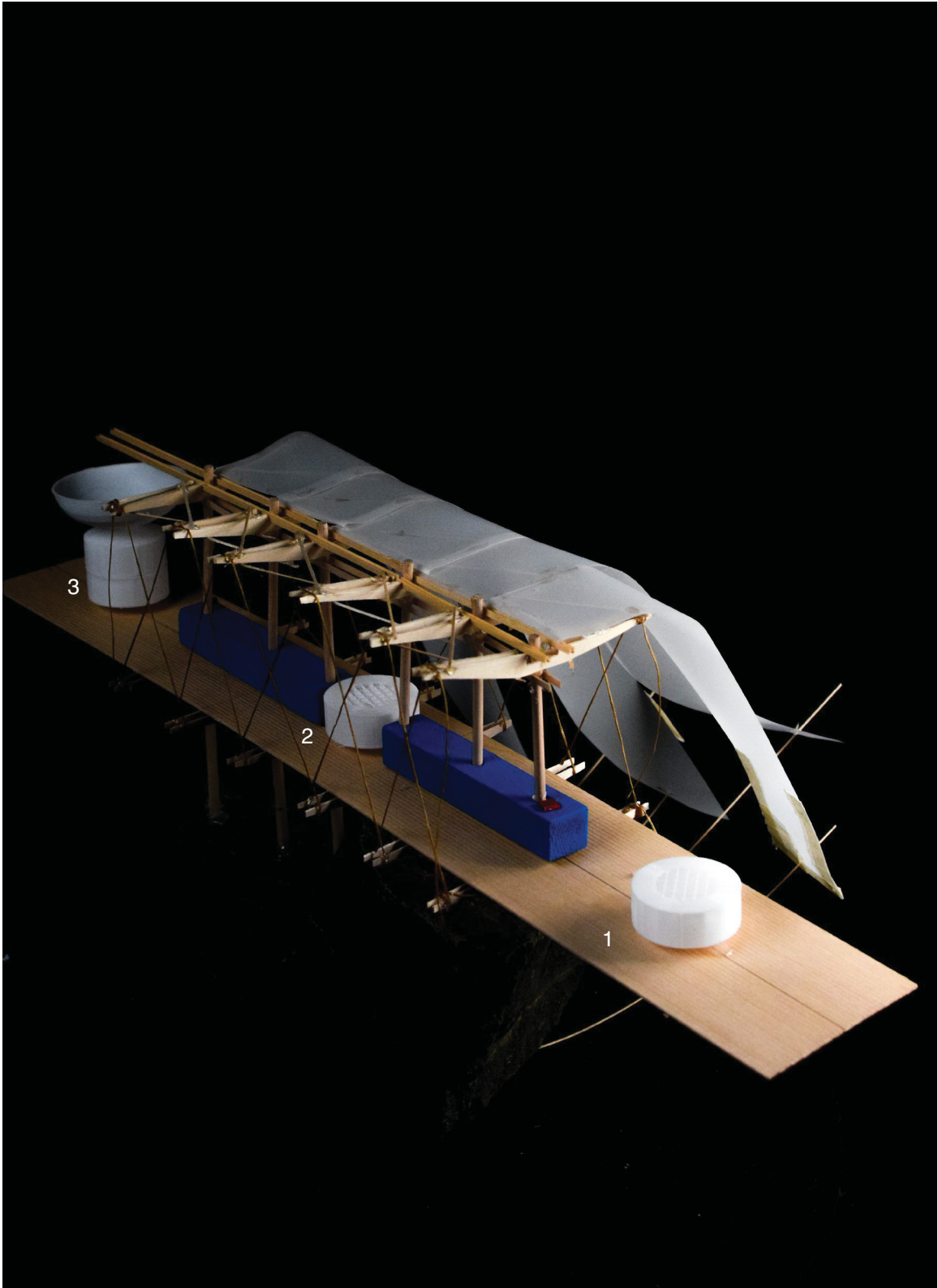
First iteration of the *gumbo house*, showing the totemic kitchen counter (blue) that grounds the building.



Testing if the grammar developed at Horton Landing is applicable to the site in the bayou. This sketch prompts a retractable roof acting as a shade.



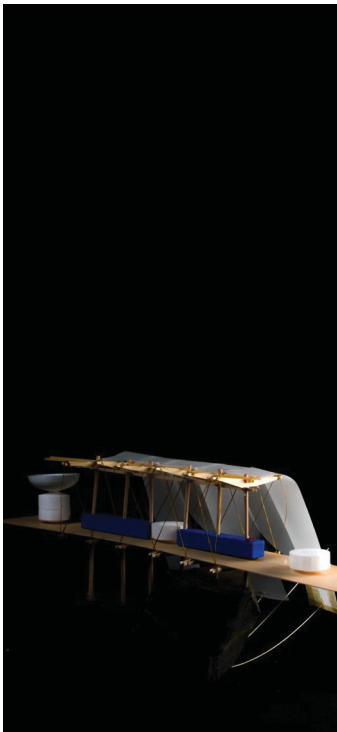
This first iteration of the *gumbo house* prompts the possibility of harvesting rainwater, boiling it, and possibly using it for cooking.



Second iteration of the *gumbo house*: (1) donation drum, (2) cooking drum, (3) water drum.



Second iteration of the *gumbo house*, showing the two totemic kitchen counter (blue) sandwiching the cooking drum in the middle.



Second iteration of the *gumbo house*, showing the vernacular grammar derived all the way from Nova Scotia.

The Totemic Kitchen Counter

The design of the *gumbo house* consists of two eighteen-foot-long kitchen counters, spanning five structural bays. In between is a firepit (the cooking drum): the hearth of the *gumbo house*, where food is stored, prepped, and cooked by volunteers during the events.

The Three Drums

Equally spanning across the length of the *gumbo house* are the three steel drums. Each has three distinct purposes. First, located close to the entry bridge, is a *donation drum*. During the events, guests are encouraged to donate three fundamental Cajun gumbo ingredients: the holy trinity, namely, onion, celery, and green bell pepper. This serves as a subtle sign of collaboration. In a way, the amount of meal provided depends on the amount of ingredients donated. Second, located at the center of the building is the *firepit drum*, where Cajun delicacies are cooked. Third, at the far end of the *gumbo house* is the *water drum*, designed to collect rainwater available for boiling and cooking. This works in tandem with the butterfly roof and built-in gutter. Together, these three drums embody the stoic principles of self-reliance and cooperation.

The Retractable Roof

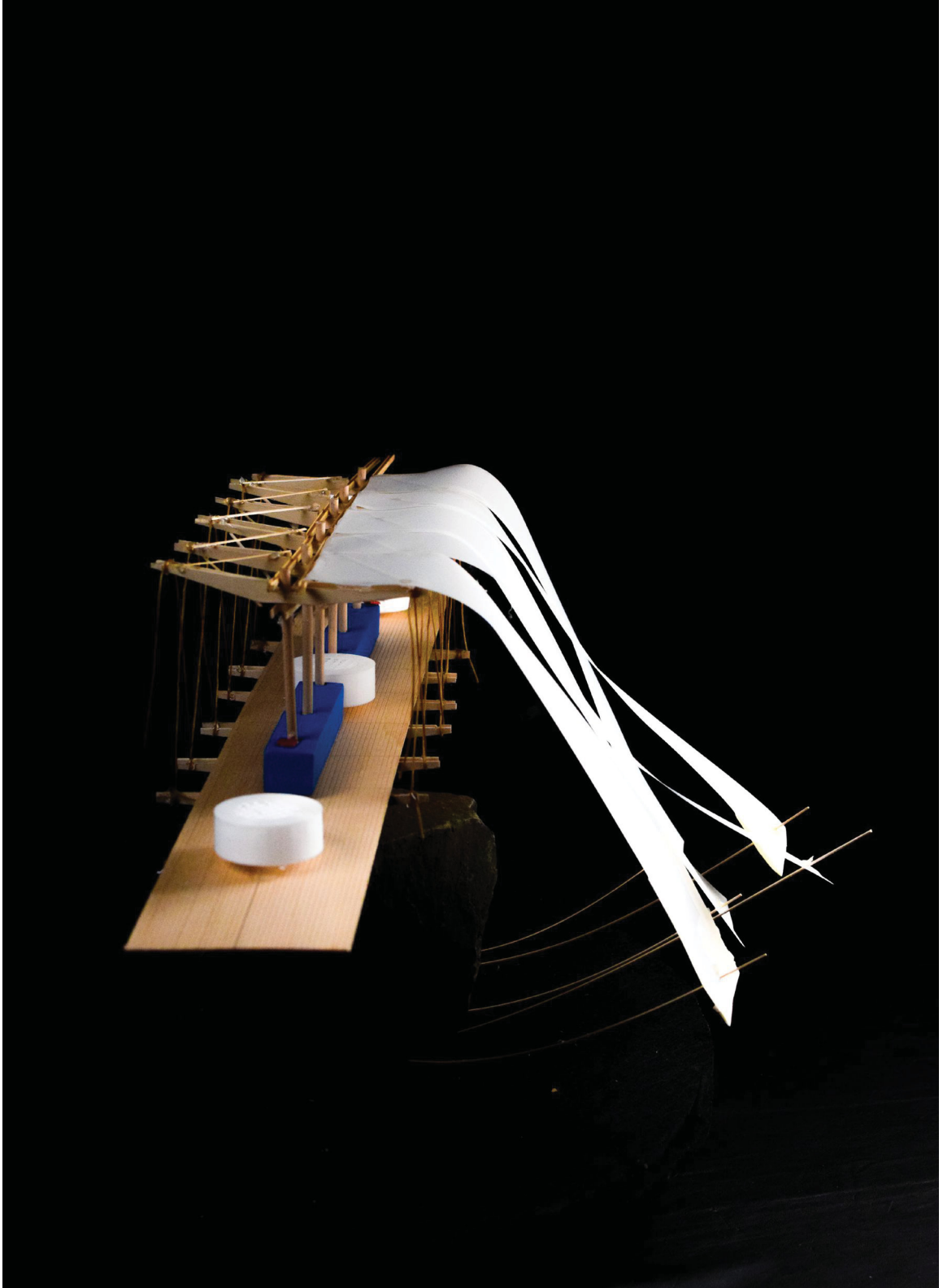
Acting as a shade during hot summer months is the removable and retractable waterproof canvas roof. When installed, its surface guides the rainwater to the built-in gutter.



Sketch of the *gumbo house* in Bayou Teche, Louisiana during a kayak race event (base photo from May 2023).



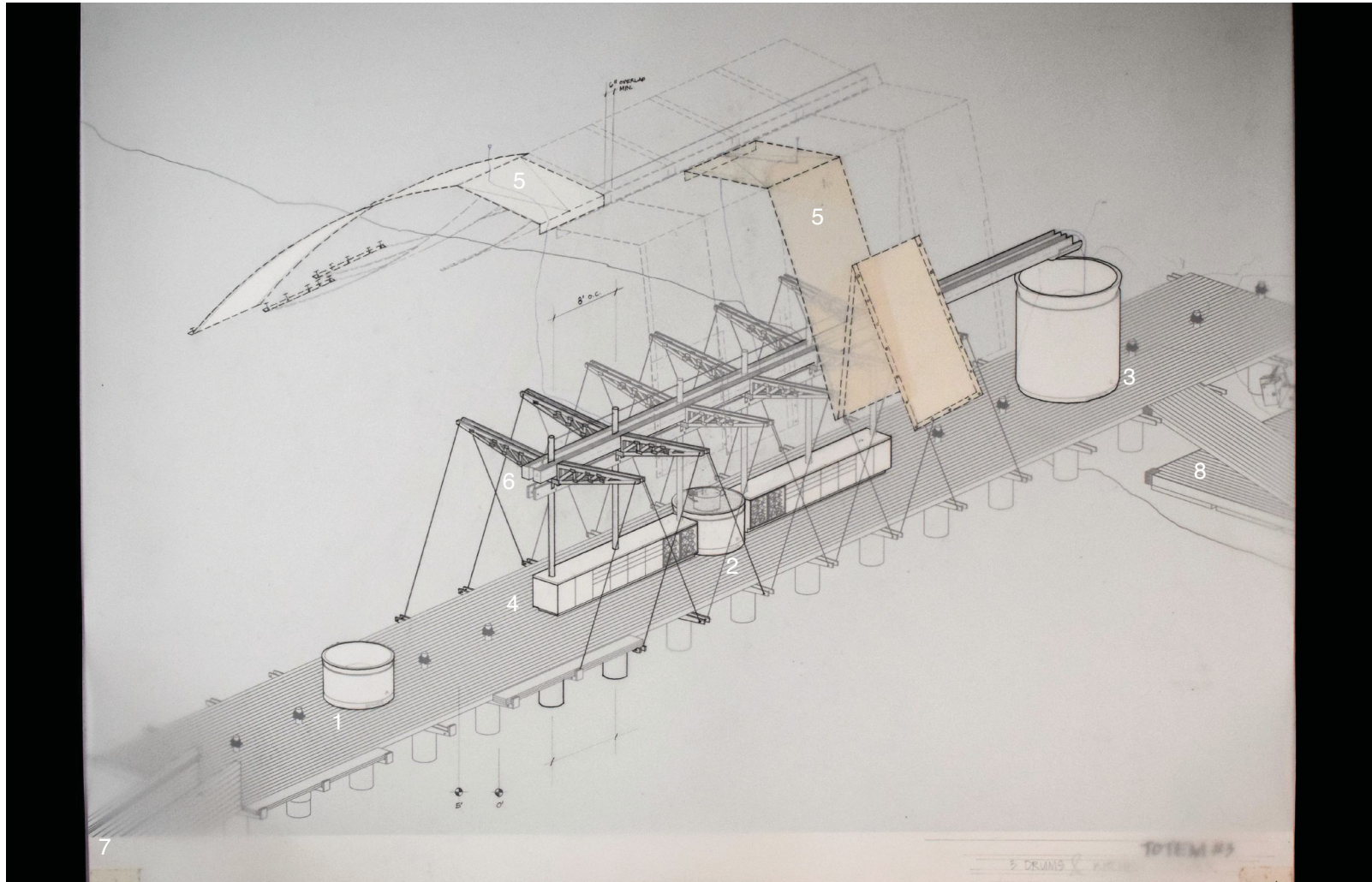
Sketch of the *gumbo house* in Bayou Teche, Louisiana during the annual boat pilgrimage (base photo from Westbrook 2022).



Second iteration of the *gumbo house*, showing the roof framing on one side and the retractable and removable canvas roof on the other.



Sketch of the *gumbo house*, showing the built-in gutter sitting on the recessed part of the butterfly roof; the granite base is a *found-object* from Horton Landing, NS.



Hybrid drawing showing: (1) the donation drum, (2) the cooking drum, (3) the water drum (4) totemic kitchen counter, (5) retractable and removable canvas roofing, (6) butterfly roof and built-in gutter, (7) entry bridge, (8) floating dock.

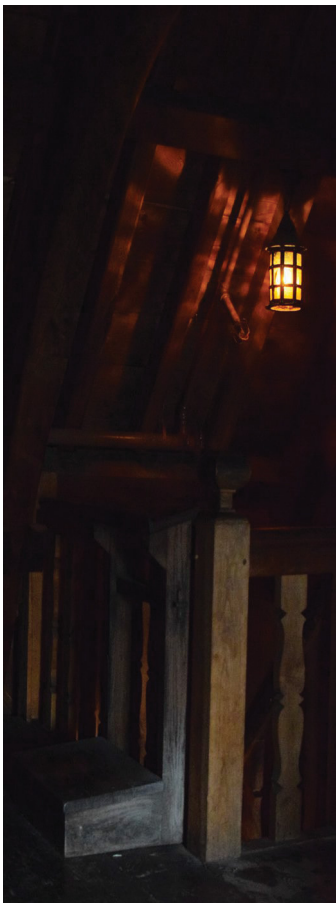
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Whether the abstract concepts presented in this thesis can be applied to real-world situations with tangible and ethical consequences is another thesis topic that merits another set of thorough and nuanced examinations.

But as far as architectural storytelling is concerned, we can use vernacular architecture for *form-making*, and stoicism for *event-making*. The vernacular shapes how things look and feel, while stoicism suggests rituals that can bring out the best in people. Together, they can develop an underlying structure, a grammar for “witnessing or reading” a particular cultural landscape, conveying a message that facts alone cannot.

Though the *Sinking Chapel*, the *Walled Garden* and the *Gumbo House* are inseparable from the Acadian heritage, they offer a small opening for reading other places. Because regardless of our fundamental differences, we navigate and witness a similar human condition in which varying degrees of faith, overcoming, and peace coexist.

Moreover, this thesis initiates a discourse on the mythopoetics of architecture and stoicism, delving into the profound existential aspects of human experience. Through vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy, this thesis shows how we can reveal the innate goodness in humans through local actions, both externally in the world and internally within ourselves. It emphasizes the value of sustained collective effort and how that can create a strong sense of community, and a deeper comprehension of the world around us.



Wooden kneeler at Port Royal: an invitation to the internal landscapes of the mind.

In addition, we can draw a conclusion that the method of working with *found-objects* can have a universal significance. One can go to a particular site and collect vernacular objects and atmospheres, which can be reimagined as key ingredients for architectural storytelling. Working with *found-objects* is useful because it influences the design process through the language of intuition and creation, and in ways that are beyond the realm of empirical facts. While the method of working with *found-objects* can be replicated, the outcomes will inevitably vary. This is because every particular place and situation is different, as much as every individual perspective is unique. This also means that if one wishes to retell the Acadian cultural landscape through architectural storytelling and through their own set of *found-objects*, there is a good probability that it will be different from this thesis. In a way, the source may be the same but the variations and interpretations from the source are likely to be different.

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent contradiction between witnessing and stoicism. Witnessing often engages our intuition, tapping into our innate sense of understanding; while stoicism fundamentally involves reason, exercising our pragmatic thought-processes. The method of working with *found-objects* relies on intuition, drawing upon our instincts and creative impulses; while the method of designing the *modes of witnessing* relies on reason, employing logic and analytical thinking to shape architectural forms.

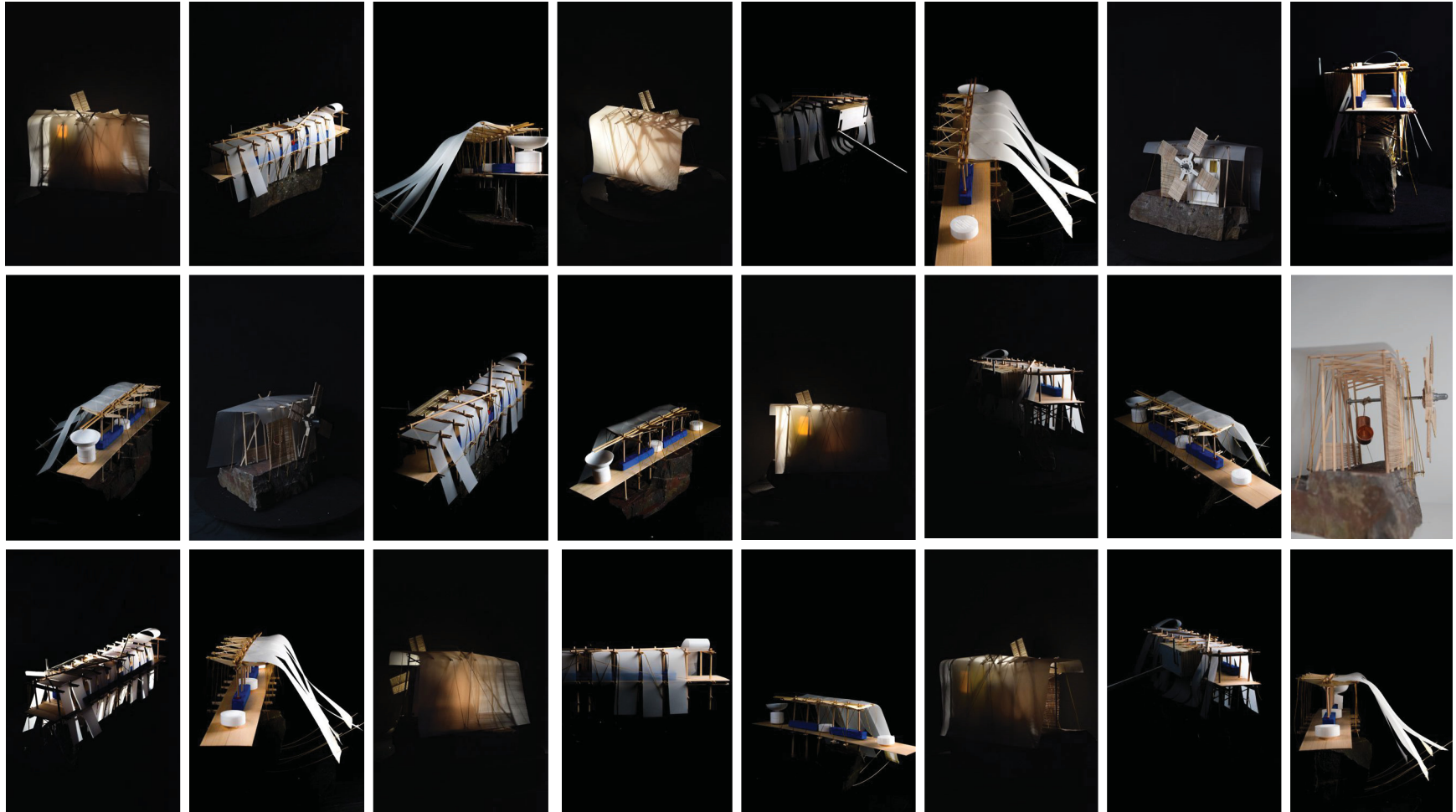
We can, therefore, draw a conclusion that in an attempt to create a poetic image, we cannot separate intuition from reason. Similar to how the guitarist needs to know the basic chords to freestyle a melody, the efficacy of the poetic image



Sketch attempting to understand a grammar that resides within; testing through intuition and reason.

depends on the craft of architecture. The delicate interplay between conceptual exploration and practical application is a skill that is applicable in practice. To explore this idea further, however, a new set of probing exercises is required, incorporating in-depth analysis of construction details and materiality. Now, whether intuition and poetry remain intact when subjected to the practical realities of architecture deserves a thesis in its own right.

Above all, in our modern world where new values are often created and the appetite for meaning and sustainability is always from “out there”, externally in the world, this thesis serves as a little reminder that the pursuit of meaning can be found from something local and internal, too. Perhaps the answer we seek is within us. Perhaps the change we need is ourselves.



Method into Grammar: combination of vernacular architecture and stoic philosophy into a grammar of forms and rituals.



Thesis defense presentation wall: an accumulation of probing exercises — sketching and testing through drawing and physical model-making — that attempt to explore the thesis question.

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