



# ARCHITECTURE

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# SECRETS

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*A study of contemporary  
secret rooms in Architecture*

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*The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it?*

- Foucault, 1982

## PROLOGUE

As a small child I found buildings magical and thought they had feelings and stories of their own. I imagined myself having secret passages and rooms in my future home that only I, and maybe a selected few, knew about. In fact, it was the very reason I wanted to become an architect in the first place.

During my studies I have come to look upon architecture as a tool to create change, rather than just create spaces. One specific interest of mine is to challenge existing norms, to understand the structures we reproduce without questioning and our role as architects in that process. So, I thought, why not combine why I wanted to become an architect in the first place – with my dedication to norm critique, equality and feminism.

I started this process not knowing where the voyage of this thesis would take me. Initiating an investigation of architectural secrets and spaces connected to intimacy and bodies. Early in my thesis work »Sveriges Kvinnolobby« presented a study which showed that Sweden is failing on 13 out of 16 points according to the UN Women's Convention. One of the failed points is in female healthcare and maternity care. (*Kvinnor i Sverige 2021. En granskning av hur Sverige lever upp till Kvinnokonventionen*, 2021) This infuriated and intrigued me.

Given that births have always been hushed up and surrounded by secrecy and rituals it felt like a natural path to take for this thesis. The debate of under prioritized female healthcare, and especially childbirth, is on the rise. Paradoxically, the four birth clinics with the highest rating in Sweden ([enbrastart.se](http://enbrastart.se)) have closed in the last few years.

Going into this project it was shocking to me when I read that giving birth at home is as safe, or even safer, than giving birth at hospitals for low-risk mothers. This according to evidence from several large studies, such as WHO, McMaster University and Cochrane Institute. The statistics got me interested in the norms surrounding childbirth, spaces for birth and to use secret rooms for shifting power structures. I will use the investigation of secret spaces supported by a series of stories from women collected through a midwife and apply it on a center for childbirth in central Gothenburg. My hope is to create a conversation piece that question existing power structures and »business as usual«. By being provocative, I want to start a dialogue about bodies, access to space and intimacy.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Secret:

*"Kept from knowledge or observation; hidden, concealed."*<sup>1</sup>

*"1 a : something kept hidden or unexplained : mystery  
b : something kept from the knowledge of others or shared only confidentially with a few"*<sup>2</sup>

1. Oxford Dictionary  
2. Encyclopedia Britannica Academic

## ABSTRACT

We are fascinated by the pyramids of ancient Egypt and the many chambers and secrets they keep. Something intrigues us about secret passages and rooms to be yet discovered, unlocked, where you can't imagine what is hiding behind the next corner. What about the contemporary secret room?

This thesis will be touching on intimacy and bodies connected to space, and the importance of having access to *A Room of One's Own* (Virginia Woolf, 1928). The manifestation, importance and uses of secret rooms in a contemporary context will be investigated and their relation to power. The application in a contemporary context means that I will place the secret room in a socio-political setting; a center for childbirth located in the city of Gothenburg.

The aim is to investigate if secret rooms can be used to re-program space and shift power. I have used: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Audre Lorde). My interpretation of that quote is that real change can never be achieved within existing power structures. Therefore, I decided to disconnect the birth room from the hospital, placing it in a totally new context; from hidden, to central and public.

Through model studies, interpretation of relevant architectural references and the layering of analogue and digital tools a language of the secret room was created. A collection of stories deriving from the voices of a selected target group were translated into architecture through design iteration and collages. *AP(a)lace for Birth* is a speculative oasis introducing an alternative narrative far away from white and sterile hospital environments. The aim is to create a conversation piece that question existing power structures and who gets authority and access to certain spaces. I want to expand zonation from private and public by adding secrets, gradients and intimacy. The pressing urgency of this topic is highlighted by the use of exaggeration and a loud design aesthetic. I invite the reader on a speculative journey where the main concept of the new narrative is shifting power structures from institutionalized patient to empowerment and owning your own story.

Keywords: secret rooms, intimacy, power, *A Room of One's Own*, unsterile, empowerment

This thesis will discuss contemporary secret rooms and their relation to power. The secret room is investigated as a tool for change, creating safety and shifting power structures. The secret space is connected to the empowerment of having access to a »secret« room of one's own, creating a new typology for safe birth places.

### THESIS QUESTION

*How can the secret room or space be **used** and **manifested** in a **contemporary** context?*

*How can one use secret rooms to re-program space?*

## METHODOLOGY

**AIM:** To investigate if secret rooms can be used to re-program space, shift power structures & create empowerment



### SETTING



### TOOLS



**CONTEXT:** Speculative center for childbirth in central Gothenburg.



**OUTCOME:** A provocative conversation piece in the form of a speculative building testing the investigation of secret rooms.

## STRATEGIES

**Changing context**, questioning norms and illuminating power structures by taking something that is usually secret (maternity clinic) and placing it in a public context.

Using **Provocative design & colour** in the creation of an alternative story for a birthplace, a temple for birth. The usage of colours and a “loud” expression, shows the urgency of the topic.

Using **speculative design** to highlight the question about prioritization and access to space.

**Exaggerating** stereotypes, using metaphors and female symbolism translated to architecture to question norms and power structures.

Using the **site as a test bed** for the investigation.

**Re-programming space & activism** to flip power structures through the introduction of the secret room.

Introducing **Safe Space** as a new topology.

Combining intimate secrets with grand monumentality to a **Monumental Intimacy**. Appropriating the expression of the monumental and »important«, but being a little off, a little too much. Using mimic, secrets, theatrical expression, gloss and sensuality.

# 2. SECRETS & SPACES

## ARCHITECTURAL SECRETS

This thesis starts with a fascination for the secret room, its manifestation, role and use. In the following chapter an overview of architectural secret spaces will be presented. The aim is to give an understanding for architectural secret spaces like the core, *poché* and *façade* but also link to the discussion about gender norms. The discussion about permanence and importance, surface and temporariness connects to this thesis socio-political context.

### Core & Structure

The core is the buildings structure, floors, slabs, stairs and installations. In the *Hidden Core of Architecture* (2012) Preston Scott Cohen separates the basic structure, the core, from »the rest« the cladding and superficial surfaces. “Architecture is now irrevocably split into two different temporaries: the temporariness of the interiors and *façades* and the relative permanence of the basic structure” (page. 8) He describes the core as the essence, the most important part of the building and as »the last part to go«.

Bonnevier writes that the structure has been attributed »masculine potency«, gendered as masculine and is generally viewed upon as essential. The surface however, feminine coded, is seen as the superficial and unimportant »other«. According to Bonnevier this binary way of looking at structure and surface is problematic and oversimplified. (*Behind Straight Curtains Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture*, 2007).

### Ornament & Gender

In *Blonde houses, White masks* (2003) Katarina Bonnevier describes ornaments as the make-up of the building. It is, however, according to her, a misunderstanding that it would amplify a lack of significance. Bonnevier means that ornaments

create order and amplifies and strengthens the architecture.

Elise de Wolfes, one of the pioneers of interior design, has even been credited as its founder. “Interior design as a profession was invented by Elsie de Wolfe” (*The New Yorker*, 1938). She challenged the dark and heavy Victorian ideals of the time with femininity which she defines as intimate, charming, light, soft and airy. Quite ironic due to the influential book *The House in Good Taste* she published in 1913, her architecture has been dismissed as »kitsch«, frumpish or as bad taste.

Architect Adolf Loos do not only see ornaments as unimportant or shallow, in *Ornament and Crime* (1908) and *Architecture* (1910) he calls them criminal, fetishistic, uncivilized and offensive to the modern time and social order. Jennifer Bloomer criticizes this point of view in *Abodes of Theory and Flesh: Tabbles of Bower* (1992), meaning ornaments and construction are inseparable.

### Façade & Gender

The *façade* could be seen as the keeper of secrets, »keeping up a *façade*«, protecting the building from the outside world and hiding it. Selma Lagerlövs residence *Mårbacka* was a facilitator of freedom for her and her lovers. The grand exterior, an act, a charade, to the outside world letting them live their lives freely inside the protection of walls. The *façade* can also be used to trick, by the use of blind windows and concealments.

Loos describes the exterior of the house in masculine terms, wanting it to look »inconspicuous« as the modern man, as a dinner jacket with black anonymous buttons (*Architecture*, 1910). According to Colomina Beatriz, Loos establishes a radical division between the masculine exteri-

or mask, the social »realm of exchange« and the intimate and sexual feminine interior (*Sexuality and Space*, 1992). This split gives the man full access to public life whilst women are banished to interiors and the private sphere. The first room devoted to women alone, the boudoir, the intimate room, is strongly connected sexuality and secrecy. This attitude also showcases the exotic view of the woman as »the other«, sensual, mystical and »ornamental«, rather than intelligent and influential.

### Served & Servant spaces

Served and Servant spaces is a strategy for organizing zoning and separating spaces established by Louis Kahn. The servant spaces, for example bathrooms, plumbing and stairs »serve« the served »living« spaces in different ways. The servant spaces are often being concealed or hidden.

The actual servant spaces, planned and built for servants to assist their employers, were also planned and built to be hidden. This can be seen in historical examples of servants' corridors, jib doors and separate entrances.

### Nijiriguchi, the threshold

Nijiriguchi is a way of entering, originated from tea houses. The children in C.S. Lewis Narnia enters the enchanted forest through a wardrobe. According to Michaëlsson the architect Terunobu Fujimori expresses this brink of entering as »equally magical« in his projects. In *Primitive architecture* (PAPER 25, 2016) Michaëlsson interviews Fujimori on the phenomenon and importance of Nijiriguchi. In one project he has used a 6 meter tall ladder, in another, a tiny crawl, both demands full attention. According to Fujimori Nijiriguchi is a threshold providing a form of resistance with the purpose of breaking with reality. Fujimori means it is through that act of utterly concentration you can forget everything else.

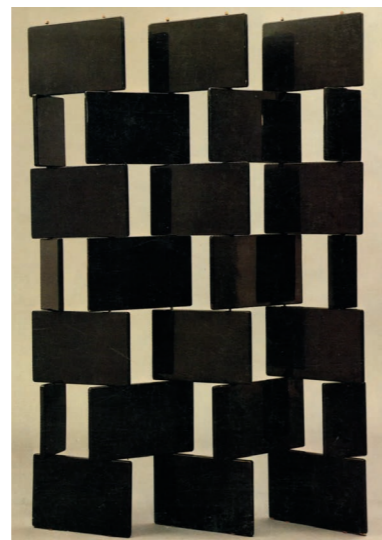


Fig. 1. Eileen Gray | 1922 | *Screen* | Eileen Gray Workshop, Paris, France. MoMA, NY.



Fig. 2. Terunobu Fujimori | 2004 | *Too-High Tea House* | Chino, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. Model.

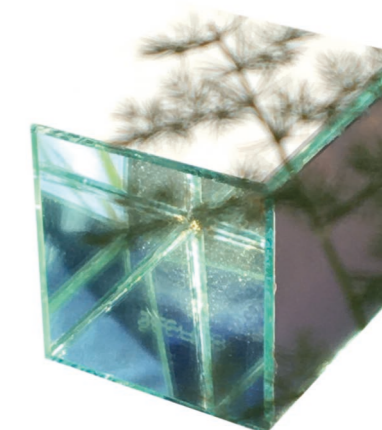
### Poché

The poché is an »in-between-space«, a »betweenness of rooms«, hidden, concealed, or even secret. On an architectural drawing the poché is the black parts, located inside the walls. In *Paradigms in the Poché* (2019) Michael Young asks, »What exactly does Poché hide?« Presenting a duality, that inside architectural drawings heavy blackness, voids or entire spaces can be hidden. Young continues by describing the poché as »the conceptual development of space differentiated from mass«. The poché can facilitate a (hidden) space, a void, in »mass«. In *What colour is Now* Sylvia Lavain suggests that the poché is virtual, located in the realm between real and ideal (2004). In chapter 4, *Design References*, E-1027 is presented where Eileen Gray hides room in what is perceived as the core, creating a kind of poché.

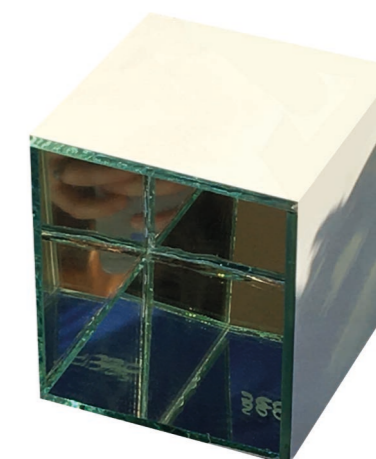
### Mirrors & Virtual reality

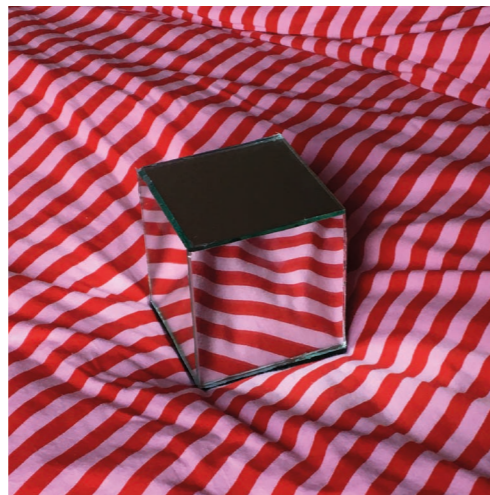
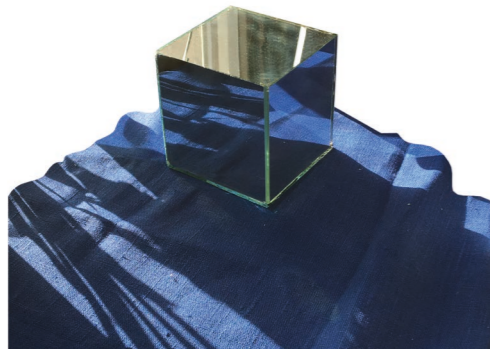
The usage of mirrors is a way of creating a sort of virtual reality. Creating a secret, non-existing and non-accessible world, exiting only inside the mirror. Mirrors mix reality with illusion and blurs the boundaries between outside and inside, the mirror is also deeply related to superficial vanity. Elise de Wolfe loved mirrors and thought they could never be to many – she used them to get rid of dark corners.

In 1965, almost half a century later, Yayoi Kusama makes the first mirror box, *Infinity Mirror Room*, evoking the feeling of endlessness and infinity that has become central in her work. Blurring the boundaries between the self and cosmos, creating »In(de)finite Spaces« (Jacobsen, PAPER 23, 2015). This game, the mirror, or reflective surfaces, plays with us and with the spaces surrounding it is a central part in the creation of secret spaces.



Model studies: inside the secret room.





Early model studies investigating strategies for concealment of the secret room with help of the mirror cube.

*nijiriguchi/ threshold*

*password*

*cave*

*tea house*



*digital secrets*

*glade*

*loft*

*jib door*

*core*

*poché*



*camouflaged structures*

*trapdoor*

*pillow fortress*



*tree house*

*"koja"*

*sliding door*

*hidden storage*

*mirror cube of infinity*



*murphy door*

Above is a diagram of the initial mapping of secret spaces and their relations. The diagram starting with different secret entrances, moving on to the exploration of the magical, nostalgic part of the secret room, who hasn't built a secret pillow fortress or tree house in the forest? Also, the diagram touches upon secrets spaces and their relation to nature and digital secrets.

**“... as we know, there are known  
knowns; there are things we  
know we know. We also know  
there are known unknowns;  
that is to say we know there are  
some things we do not know.  
But there are also unknown  
unknowns – the ones we don’t  
know we don’t know.”**

**- Donald Rumsfeld 2002**

*The nature of secrets and how places can be secret  
and how we can look upon secrets.*

## WHAT MAKES A SECRET ROOM SECRET?

The secrecy of a room can lay in its organization, zonation and purpose, a play with perception and space. There is a great division of the secret room as a force of empowerment, a room of one’s own, and the secret room as a captivator, concealment or banishment. The secret space is, or can be, politically charged. In this part an overview is provided for the gender coding of spaces and that the spaces of secrecy and intimacy generally have been associated with woman and domestic environments.

Going forward, **Nijiriguchi**, the threshold, or act of entering, is applied as a design tool in the construction of the secret room. The Nijiriguchi provides a barrier for entering the space, with the aim of leaving the outside world behind, »letting go« before you enter the secret space.

**Escape routes** - As mentioned, the safe, almost magical, secret space can easily convert into something ominous and unsafe if one feels captivated or trapped.

The secret room has a flow to it, where multiple paths are crucial. They offer alternative routes and movements creates safety and the ability of accessing at one’s own term.

**Stage & backstage** – It is in the nature of the secret space to have a duality to it; it needs to be in relation to an open space in order to be secret. The ability of moving between stage and backstage creates empowerment. In the study presented in chapter 5, many women requested the opportunity to »nest« in addition to the more open space. This »duality of secret spaces« is used as one of the design tools applied at the birth room.

**Lure, fake & mimic** – The act of hiding, luring and cladding is a part of the secret space. By the usage of surfaces, ornaments or façades, one can pretend to be something one is not (Mårbacka). Virtual reality and mirrors can be used in this game of appropriating, theatrical expression and exaggeration, which manufactures the secret space.

## CONTEMPORARY SECRET SPACES

In the mapping of contemporary secret spaces, I discovered rooms that are »normative glitches«. These spaces glitch or misbehave according to social norms. These rooms are like pockets, pochés if you like, located between the real and ideal. In the beginning of this thesis, I headed out on a quest to find contemporary secret rooms, these spaces are creating an anarchistic resistance.

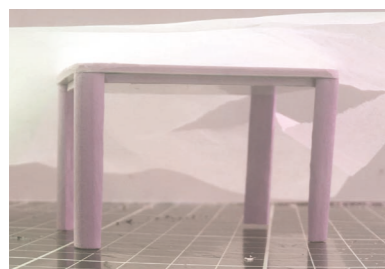
### WEB FORUM

These forums are often closed and secret, often on Facebook, creating a sense of a safety. People in these groups are non-anonymous, however they speak as if they were, the dialogue is intimate and the topics very personal.

### RAVE

The Rave creates a parallel temporary secret room for one night only.

### »KOJA« UNDER THE TABLE



Children create in play these parallel secret universes to gain power, with new roles and norms to follow.

### CLUB TOILET

TÄNKER DU IBLAND PÅ ALLA SNÄLLA FULLA TJEJER SOM DU TRÄFFAT PÅ OLIKA TOALETTER OCH UNDRAR HUR DOM HAR DET?



Fig. 4. Hanna Stenman & Lisa Ewald. (2015). *Tjejer på toaletter*. Translation: "Do you sometimes think of all the nice drunk girls you have met in different bathrooms and wonder how they are? I miss you all."

The club toilet could be seen as anarchistic, following other codes. One who would never have graffitied in another context may have done so in a club bathroom. It is also a very suggestive atmosphere, the loud music from the outside is muffled but pronounced, enabling private conversations without the risk of being overheard. The lighting is dim, the smell of perfume heavy and the edges a bit blurry thanks to one drink to many. A feeling of confidentiality arises; it is us, against the rest. The girl's bathroom is also related to the theatrical act of performance, all the mirrors, putting on makeup, for »the show«?



# 3. DISCOURSE

**The master's tools will  
never dismantle the  
master's house.**

• **Andre Lorde**

## POWER & SECRETS

Who gets to be seen, heard, participate or set the agenda? Power influences all structures and all relationship in society, it is omnipresent. Power is highly connected to space, the one who gets a room gain power. The secret room is located somewhere in juxtapose to the powerful public. However, the secret room has always held a great deal of and power of its own. To have a (secret) room of one's own is to have power over that place, it can for example be separatistic or gathering. The room provides freedom and empowerment for you, and your equals.

Intersectionality is how different power structures interlink, influence and reinforce each other. The categories of biases are race, gender, class, age, sexuality and religion. One of the most influential writers in the area is bell hooks. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* she writes "To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (1984). A person in a position of an oppression in one context, can be in a position of privilege in another. hooks request a shift for power where the oppression of others is not necessary (1984, p. 92). In order for a society to be safe we must first dismantle the injustices and demolish the hierarchies.

According to Henri Lefebvre the production of space is highly social and produced through acts (*Production of Space*, 1974) According to Lefebvre, space is a social act, something we create as a collective. Far away from Mies van der Rohe's definition of the beginning of architecture "Architecture starts when you carefully put two

bricks together. There it begins." In *Mies Not* Beatriz Colomina writes that Mies definition is "about the dumbest definition of architecture I have ever heard." (1994, p. 173-174). Where I see architecture as a tool for change, I would define Mies definition of architecture as a dead object, most certainly not social. The safety in my proposal *P(a)lace for Birth* is created through the usage of its people, the nesting, the claiming and the co-creation of spaces.

Michel Foucault claims that power is omnipresent and it exists in all relations and that one is "never 'outside' it". According to Foucault we cannot even begin to navigate in power relations with such an invalid and dated view of power. Foucault divides power relations into three terms, the pre modern » sovereign power«, and the two modern forms »disciplinary power« and »biopower«. Disciplinary power is related to discipline, bodies and labour work of the individual. Biopower is on a group, or population-level, acting for the "greater good", through norms rather than regulations. These acts can be carried out different ways of seizing control over the population (Taylor D, *Michel Foucault : Key Concepts*, 2014). As Foucault says, power is always present, but by making the structures visible they can also be dismantled.

My project aims at creating empowerment, and for women to be in power of their births. Thereby changing the context, and creating a new space with a new set of rules and norms.

## HEM-LIGT/HEM-SKT

- *The »safe home« as a social construction*

There are many norms surrounding our homes and the strongest one is social construction of the home as a »safe« space. For many people, especially women, this is far from the truth. It is more likely for women to be abused in her own home by a man she is related to, or in an intimate relation with than by an acquaintance or someone unknown (BRÅ). In 2019 sixteen women were murdered by a person they had, or used to have, a relationship with. (Sveriges Kvinnolobby & CEDAW, 2021). 38,200 abuses against women were reported in 2019 and the lock-down during the covid-19 pandemic has brought an increasing number of reports of men's violence against women (2021).

The home has historically been seen the realm of women. In the Swedish there is an interlink of the word, secret, home and horrible. The word »home« translated to Swedish is »hem«. The origin of the two Swedish words »HEM-LIGT«, which means secret, and the word »HEM-SKT«, which means horrible, both originates from the word »home«.

In my project I am removing the birth place from both home and hospital, and the power structures surrounding them. Thereby a new space is created, *AP(a) lace for Birth*, breaking with existing hierarchies and power structures, creating a new storyline.

### HEM- LIGT

”som hör till huset el. familjen, förtrolig, hemlig = mhty. heimelich; till hem. Den moderna betyd. utgår från den av: hörande till el. uppehållande sig i hemmet o. därför dold för främmandes blickar.”

Translation:

SECRET

”as belonging to the house or the family, confidential, secret = mhty. heimelich; to home. The modern meaning is based on: belonging to or dwell in the home and therefore hidden from the eyes of strangers.”

### HEM- SK

”Ordet är en avledn. av HEM o. betyder eg.: som endast vistats hemma, som icke varit ute i världen, ur vilken bet. utvecklats bet.: dum, försagd, ängslig, dystyr”

Translation:

HORRIBLE

”The word is a diversion of the word HOME and means: who has only stayed at home, who has not been out in the world, from which the meaning developed to mean: stupid, timid, anxious, gloomy”.

- SAOB, Swedish Academy Dictionary

## A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

To have a room of one's own is to have power. The own room is both a physical and mental space and the knowledge of having access to such a space provides empowerment and safety.

In 1928 Virginia Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own*, an early feminist text. The essay criticizes the woman's domestic role and the importance of having access to a room of one's own in order to live and work. In the *The Second Gender* (1949) Simone de Beauvoir describes the woman as »the other«, complementary and subdued to men. De Beauvoir claims that gender is created through circumstances "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman". If gender roles are created, as well as the norms surrounding them, it should also be able to dismantle them, transform and adapt the view of gender.

In a project called »Playan« located in Gothenburg, Katarina Bonnevier in her work with MYCKET created a beach. In the project secret spaces and private rooms where a necessity for certain groups of people to be able to participate in the public sphere. The »secret room« was created through making the beach separatistic during certain hours. Others secret spaces where the booths generated for people who could not usually participate in a context like a beach. The booths provide a private space to, for example, take medications or have a rest.

I will use this »Room of one's own« later in the project, in the birth room, as a nest. The nest is an intimate secret room that is secluded but in relation to the open space.

## WHITNESS, STERILITY & INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Today, the narrative of the pregnant woman as a patient is the only one we have. Giving birth at hospitals is the only option for women in Sweden (if you do not want to finance a home birth by yourself). On a philosophical level it is peculiar that birthing places are developed as sterile environments, since sterile meaning, infertile or the absence of life.

During my architectural studies there has been a never-ending discussion about purity, order and the »raw« and »honest« materials. This has got me thinking about the dishonest and filthy materials. What are they really? The modernist movement was obsessed with whiteness, purity and the elimination of »dirt« and ornamentation. According to Till the visual cleanliness of the movement is correspondingly associated with social moral (*Architecture Depends*, 2013).

The societal norms have been narrower for women historically, continuing to modern day. According to Foucault the creation of the standard of health was first introduced in the mid-eighteenth century (Taylor D, *Michel Foucault : Key Concepts*, 2014). Healthcare went from individual assessment to the creation of a healthy and »ideal« human, a standard, that all were compared to. These norms led to the sterilization and lobotomizing of women who were classified as deviant in the early to mid-twentieth century. According to Foucault there is inconsistency in what is seen as physiological ill, it has a tendency to reflect the current norms and social orders rather than actual medical conditions (2014).

The year 1944, when lobotomizing came to Sweden 27 out of 28 lobotomizations were performed on women. This is according to Ulrika Nilsson, scientist at *Stockholm University*, due to the fact that female sexual deviation was seen as far worse than men (*Forskning och Framsteg*, 2007). In the period of 1944 to 1958 4500 people were lobotomized 61% were women (riksdagen, 2006).

This institutionalized view surrounding the female body and childbirth is still actual. Pregnant women are seen as patients, pregnancy as dangerous and something you can hardly cope with. The clinical white walls and rational sterile environments reinforce that narrative. One of the largest requests in the study carried out in this thesis (which will be presented in chapter 5) were the desire of a non-sterile environment. What was interesting was that many women asked specifically for non-white surfaces, walls and interiors that they feel remind them of sickness and unpleasantness. There is a misconception in the idea of the white as synonym with cleanliness and truth, as the opposite of dirt, dishonesty and exoticism. This project elevates the perspective of the right to the own body, sexuality and space. Through colours and exaggerated aesthetics, embracing life and appropriating on the concept of the »other«. Most pregnant women are, in contrast to common beliefs, both strong and healthy.

## BIRTH STATISTICS

According to »patientlagen« the patient law, one has the right to choose healthcare. However, Sweden only provides one choice in the location for childbirth and that is at the hospital.

At »Östra Sjukhuset« in Gothenburg there is an ongoing study called »room4birth«. They are investigating if the room for birth can influence the birth. In the study they have a »secret room« and participating women can through a lottery get access to that space during birth. In that room there is for example dimmed lighting, the possibility of warm baths, hidden equipment and you get the opportunity to choose sounds.

70% of all nulliparous women in Sweden got artificial oxytocin through IV to strengthen labour pains (Socialstyrelsen, 2011). According to the midwife Märta Cullhed Engblom we rarely ask ourselves why the labor pains are getting weak in the first place and what it is in the birthing clinic that contributes to that (fodamedstos.se, 2017).

One can imagine that alarms, blinking lights, new people, pain, the fear of being sent home and too few midwives does not increase the feeling of safety. The hormone oxytocin is an important player in the act of giving birth and is disturbed by stress or worry. At the hospital many disturbances are going on, but does it have to be like that?

Several large studies shows that births at home or at midwifery led unit are as safe, or safer than hospital. It is safe if there is a low-risk mother with an anticipated normal birth, the birth is assisted by a competent midwife and that transfer to a hospital is possible if there would be a complication. McMaster University published a study in 2019, having studied 500 000 cases of home births, claiming that giving birth at home is as

safe as giving birth at the hospital. Cochrane Institute also comes to the conclusions that hospital births are not safer, on the contrary, they “may lead to more interventions and more complications” (Olsen O, Clausen JA, 2012). According to WHO to give birth at home or at a midwifery led unit, is: “particularly suitable for them [low risk nulliparous and multiparous women] because the rate of interventions is lower and the outcome for the baby is no different compared with an obstetric unit” (2015).

According to a large British study (Hutton EK, Reitsma A, Simioni J, Brunton G, Kaufman K, 2020) with 500 000 participating (low risk) women with planned assisted home birth had, compared to (low risk) women giving birth at hospital, a:

- 40% less probability for third- or fourth-degree rupture
- 60% less probability for artificial oxytocin
- 75% less provability of infection after labor
- 30% less probability for post-partum bleeding

This does not fit the societal conception of what a birth is, or should be. Definitely not following the book when it comes to what is, by society, considered as safe. The norms surrounding the female body, pregnancies and births are strong. So strong they can outmanoeuvre research? There seems to be an immunity to evidence, often referring to anecdotal horror examples. It is like comparing apples and oranges, only because one thing is safest in one context does not make it applicable in every. We need to listen to the women and let them be in charge of the process of childbirth and provide more choices when it comes to places for birth. This according to both the desires of women and evidence.

## NUMBERS

929

women did not have a space to give birth in Stockholm 2020  
(SVT, 2021)

113 391

total births in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen, 2019)

18 992

births in Västra Götaland (Socialstyrelsen, 2019)

≈ 10 000

births in Gothenburg at SU - Östra or Mölndals hospital  
(Medicinska födelseregistret, 2016)

# 4. DESIGN REFERENCES

*The architectural references projects have been selected according to the discourse of secrecy and power. Both architects were norm-breaking women in a world dominated by men. In Eileen Gray E-1027 several tools for designs are fetched.*

## GRAY, SECRETS & INTIMACY

In the late 1920s Eileen Gray plays with secret rooms, **hidden passages** and sequences in E-1027 located in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France. Gray challenges the norms of a home, both by being a woman architect in the 1920s but also with the architecture she creates. A large bed is placed centrally in the living room creating a sensual feel. The kitchen is one of the first things you see when you are approaching the house. It is disconnected from the rest and you need to go out the front door to reach it. She plays with architectural elements, hiding the central stair behind a wall as well as integrating functions and storage in walls.

Identified strategies :

**Entering by rounding corners.** Gray uses this strategy, not knowing what comes next to create thrill and dramaturgy.

**Hiding spaces in/behind walls.** This almost creates »pochés«, shown in purple on the plan.

**Escape routes.** There are 5 exits from the boudoir, they are shown with dotted lines on the map.



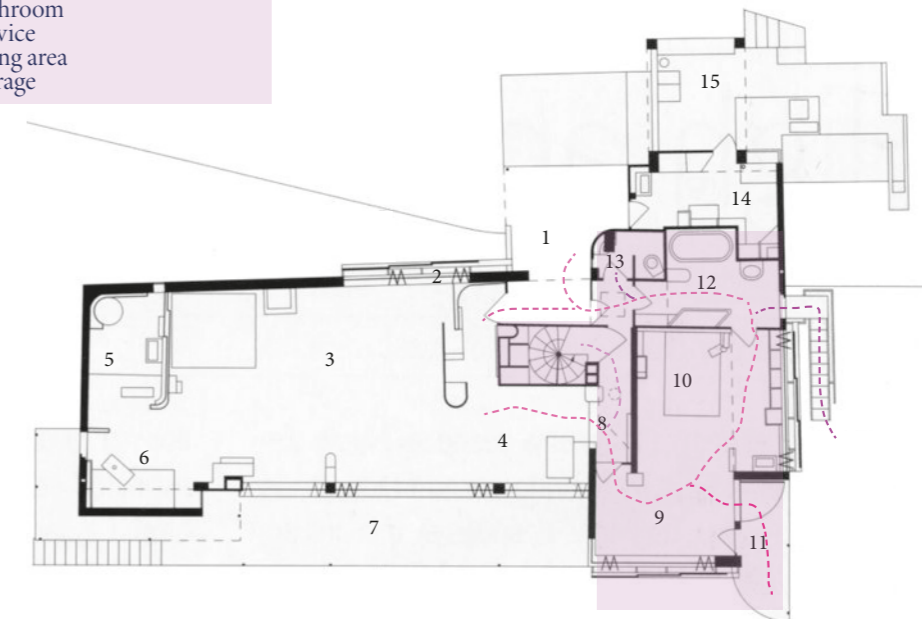
Fig. 5. Staged photograph of the Boudoir of E-1027 taken by Eileen Gray herself. (1929). National museum of Ireland.



Fig. 6. Photograph of the living room of the restored E-1027 by Manuel Bougot. The mural made by Le Corbusier is covered by a white screen placed in front of it.

### Eileen Gray, E-1027

- upper level**
- 1. entrance
- 2. closet
- 3. living room
- 4. foyer
- 5. bathroom
- 6. alcove
- 7. upper terrace
- 8. hallway
- 10. master bedroom/ boudoir
- 11. terrace
- 12. bathroom
- 13. lavatory
- 14. kitchen
- 15. laundry area/outdoor (summer) kitchen
- lower level**
- 16. bedroom
- 17. dressing room
- 18. service entrance
- 19. bathroom
- 20. service
- 21. living area
- 22. storage



Gray hid the Boudoir, stair and 2nd bathroom in a secret »poché« behind a bar in the foyer (4).

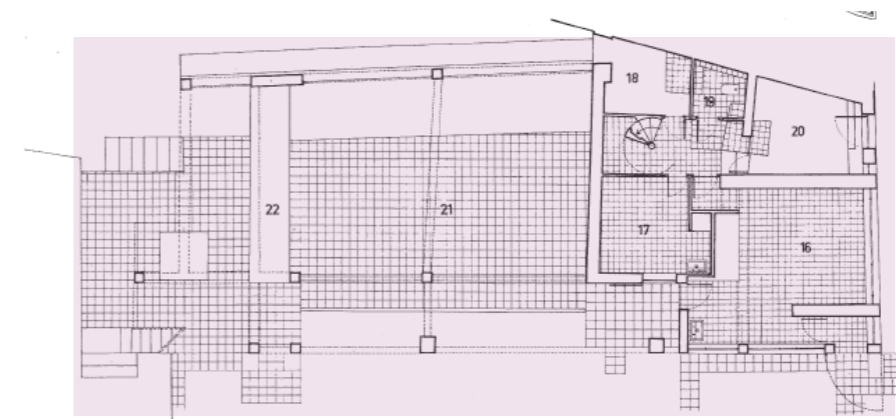


Fig 7. Floor plans, National Museum of Ireland. The stair to the 1st floor is also hidden, and the entire floor can be read as secret .

## THE GLASS HOUSE



Fig 8. *The Glass House* (1950) is located in São Paulo, Brazil and is made by architect Lina Bo Bardi.

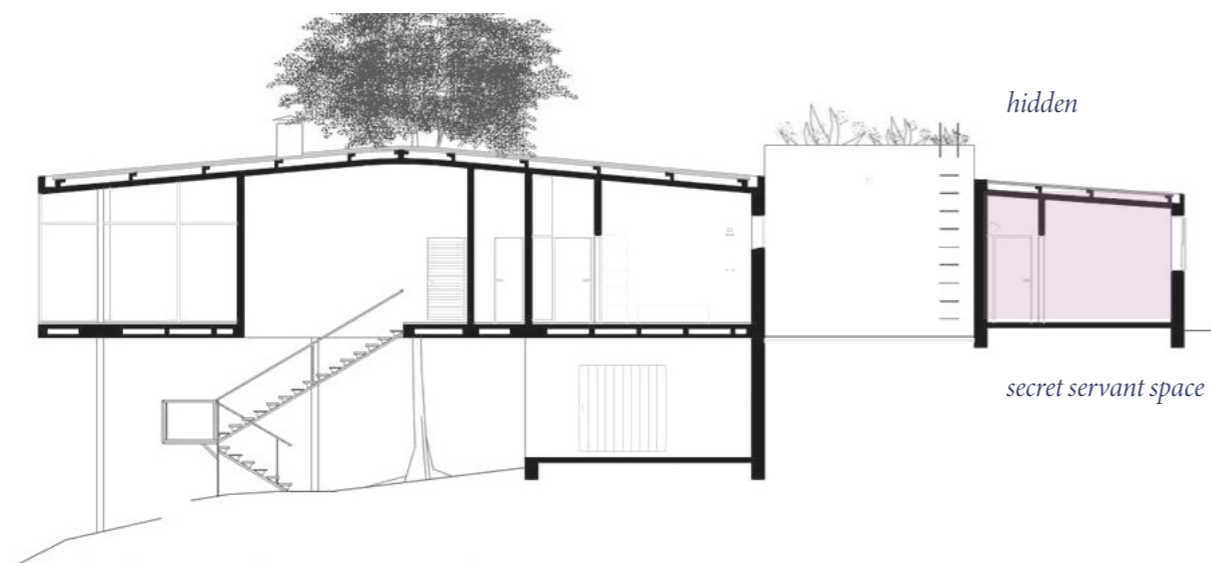


Fig 9. Bo Bardi, L. (1950). *Sections*.

Besides the Glass House itself there is a secret space, the servant space, that is facilitating the open glasshouse. The servant space is located behind it and is completely hidden and secret - like the servants. I could find no images of the space and I had to look for a long time to find drawings that even included the servant space.



Fig 10. Floor Plan of *The Glass House*. By Georg Weilenmann, Victor Lepik & Jaehee Sheen. (2018) LINA BO BARDI: CASA DE VIDRO.

# 5. DESIGN ACT 1; INVESTIGATION

*In act 1, strategies and design tools were constructed by first implementing design references and the secret room into a model study. Furthermore, a study was conducted to collect the opinions of women. From the study themes were created. Combining these themes and the model study formed the design tools and strategies which will be applied in act 2; the proposal.*

## POWER STRUCTURES



*A diagram of how secret rooms can relate to existing power structures and be used to re-program space and change power. The lines represents different power structures such as class, gender, age, sexuality, origin & race. The black surfaces are the secret spaces making resistance in-between structures.*



*In these initial model studies, a conceptual study of rooms, their uses and relations were made.*



*Model: A. A visualization of the institutionalized healthcares view of women giving birth. The veil representing the taboos and norms surrounding births. The pink, the power of birth.*



*model A*



*Adding the shell.*



*In model B, the secret room (the shell), for empowerment has been introduced. The divider later turned into the Nijiraguci.*



*model B*

## STUDY, SETUP

*In collaboration with a midwife desires for a future birth place were collected. The study had 381 participants and 528 answers. In the following pages the study will be presented further. Full information of the study can be found in the appendix.*

Setup for study: The study was completely free and open. The participants could send in how many suggestions they wanted via midwife Asabea Brittons (@asabea) Instagram account. The participants were not anonymous so I see could whom sent what answer and how many answers per person. The answers can only be three (Instagram question-box) lines long, meaning that if you want to write more, you need to submit another answer. The opportunity to send in answers was on a “story” and therefore open for 24 hours.

Critique on method: It was not the easiest method for managing the collected data. The data is not really comparable or reliable. I did not collect any background, or personal data from the participants besides their answer and Instagram name. Some answers were long and detailed, others only submitted one or a few words. One can also claim that “specific types” are following Asabea, since she gave birth at home, and can be seen as more “alternative”. She is however a midwife working at a hospital. However, my ambition was never to find “truth” or consensus. Rather, collecting stories from the actual target group, narratives to build the speculative birth center from. I did not expect getting so many answers or that the subject would engage so many.

## PRESENTING STUDY

Study through a midwife with 381 participants

*BATHTUB IN BIRTH ROOM*

*THE POSSIBILITY TO CHANGE/  
DIM LIGHT*

*DARK COLOURS*

*SAFE ENVIRONMENT*

*”HOME-FEEL”*

*NICE FOOD*

*SPA/HOTEL-FEEL*

*PLACE FOR FAMILY AND PARTNER*

*NON-STERILE*

*The biggest requests of the study*

## THEMES

The themes deriving from the desires of women collected in the study are put into themes in the diagram below. These stories will continue in the booklet as pink quotes populating the pages. The desires has also been translated into 'collages of desires.'

OASIS/TEMPLE

BATH FOR BIRTH

SOFT SHAPES

NATURAL  
LIGHTING

NON-STERILE

SAFETY &  
FAMILIARITY

TRANQUILLITY  
& SPA-FEEL

SPACE FOR  
FAMILY &  
PARTNER

CANDLES &  
SOFT LIGHTING

(FORCE OF)  
NATURE

COMMUNITY

DARKNESS  
& MUTED  
COLOURS

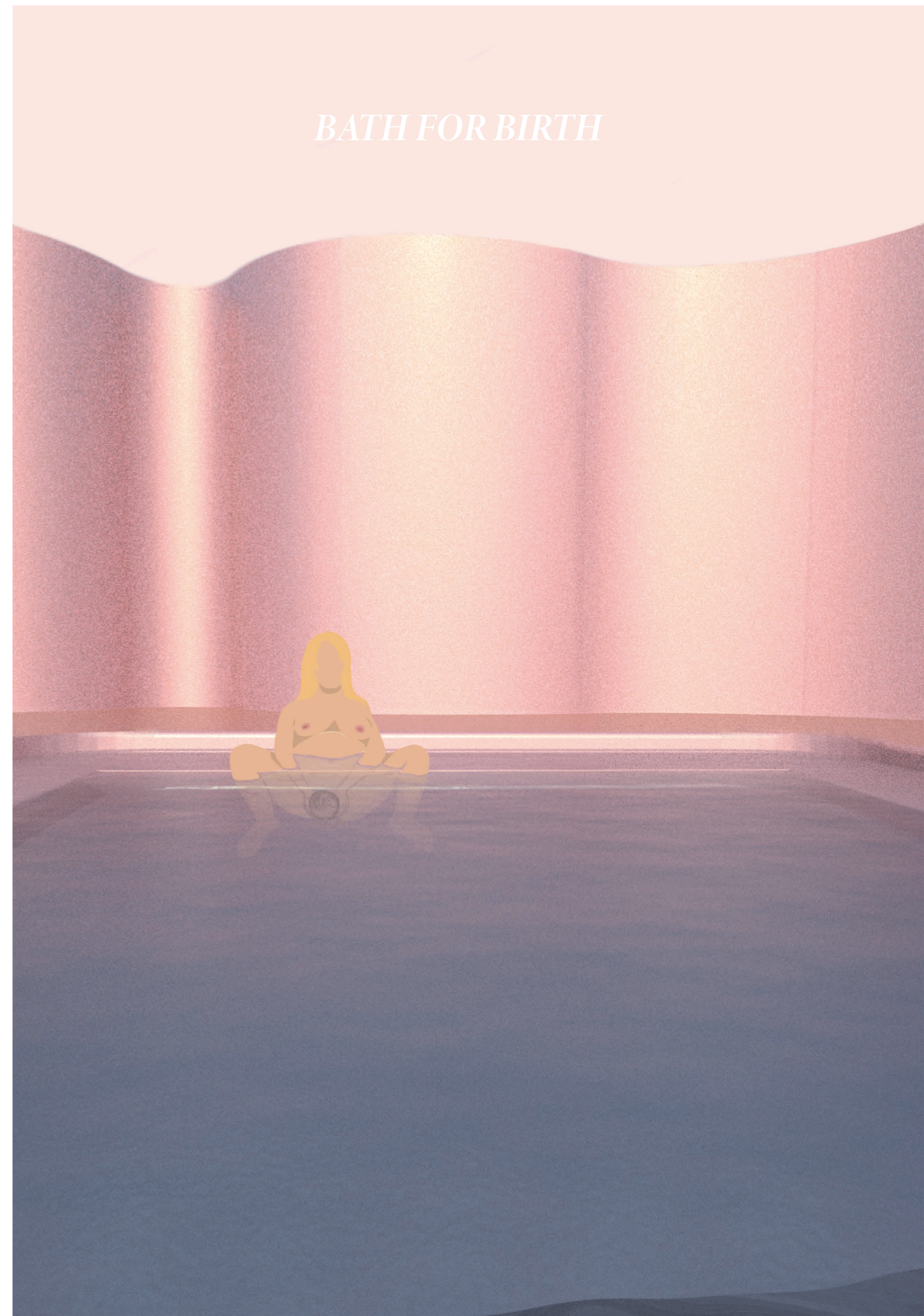
NEST

**“MAYBE OBVIOUS BUT A BATH,  
IT SHOULD BE BIG ENOUGH TO MOVE AROUND IN <3”**

**“The opportunity to  
give birth in water”**

**“Bath in the  
birth room itself”**

**“BATH, A LOT OF WATER, WARMER TEMPERATURE,  
ROUND, SOFT SHAPES AND DIMMED LIGHT.”**



**“It shall feel ceremonial.”**

**“PURE LUXURY, SPA AND A FRUIT TRAY. I WANT TO FEEL LIKE A GODDESS!”**

**“SOCIAL AREA, LIKE AN OASIS, WITH A FOUNTAIN WHERE WOMEN GATHER AND SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.”**

**“The place feels a bit “sacred”, like a temple.”**



**“I would love a garden. I dilated with my first hanging in a tree outside SÖS. It was the best place.”**

**“A SECLUDED GARDEN TO TAKE LABOR PAINS IN. WITH PLANTS AND TREES, WATER AND BENCHES.”**

**“Close to nature, plants, garden, streaming water, trees & sky. A beautiful view and natural sounds.”**



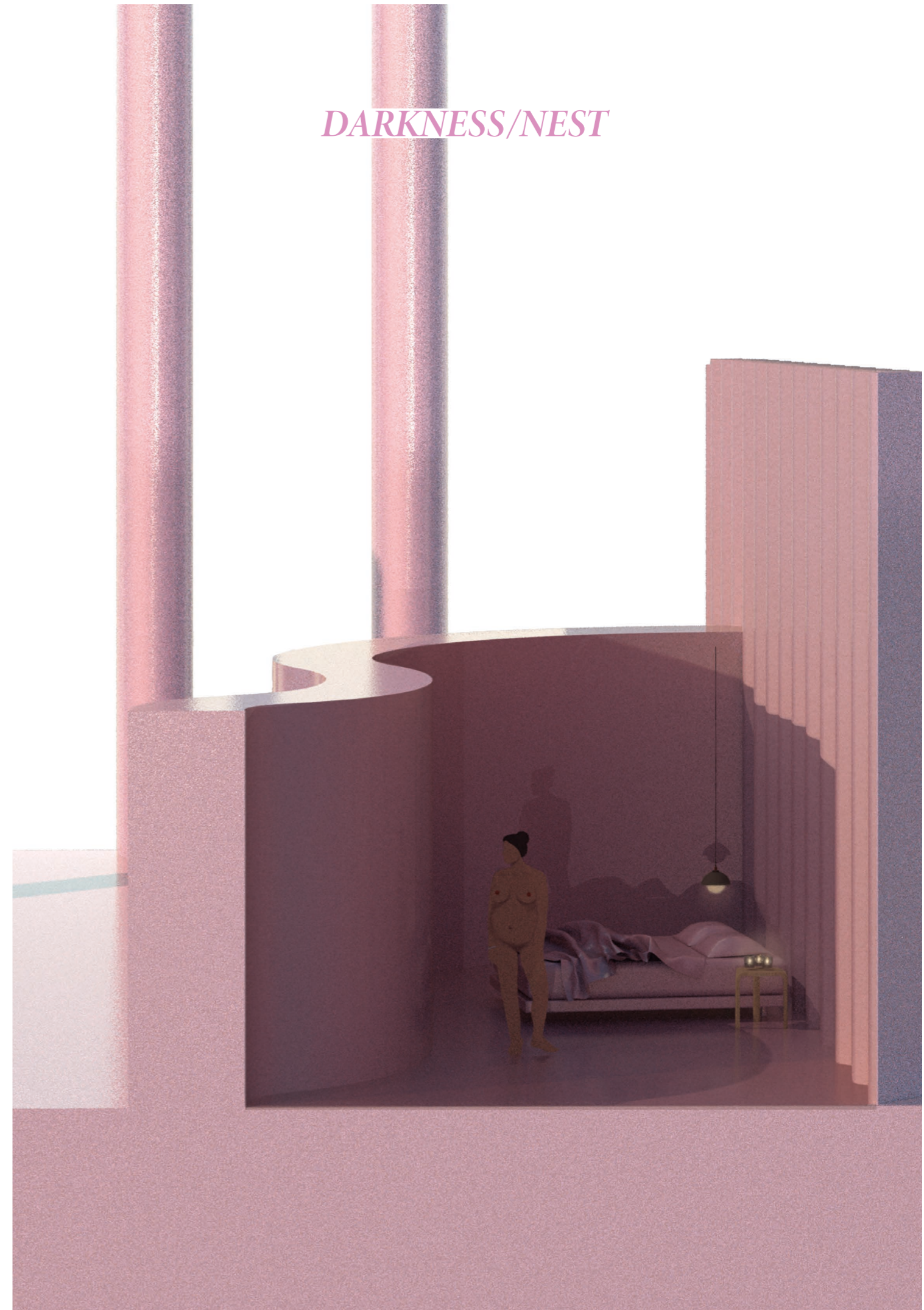
**“Candles, no things that feel  
“hospitally”, soft pillows.”**

**”NO VISIBLE TECHNIQUE, BEING  
ABLE TO NEST AND CREATE  
PRIVACY.”**

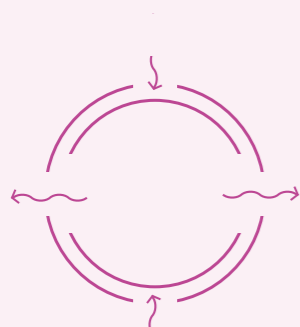
**”Small rooms, with  
opportunity to darkness.”**

**“Pink walls, fairy lights, enormous  
beds, a feeling of tranquility.”**

*DARKNESS/NEST*



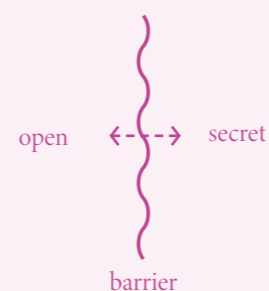
### ESCAPE ROUTES



Escape routes - Connected to the secret room. The (safe and free) secret room can hastily turn into a captivator. Therefore I am exploring multiple entrances and exists.

Eileen Gray had 5 escape routes from her boudoir in E-1027

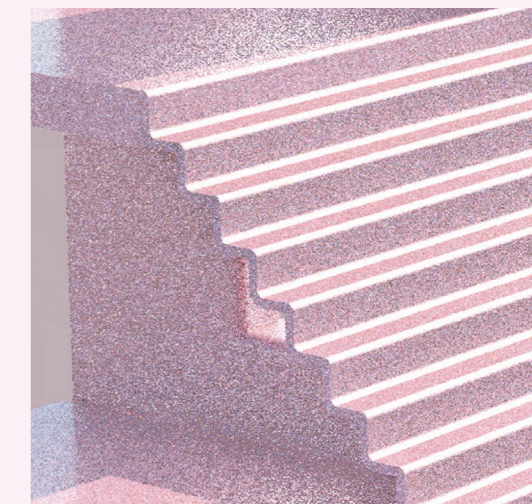
### NIJIRAGUCI



Nijiraguci/entering - a physical and mental threshold, or barrier, separating the outside from the secret space. "Nijiraguci" originates from the Japanese teahouse (Fujimoto). I want to activate this barrier to also work as a facilitator, a "servant" to the open and secret space. (Kahn & Bobardi)



DUALITY OF SECRET SPACES/HIDING ROOMS



ANTI-STERILE, curvy stair

### DUALITY OF SECRET SPACES

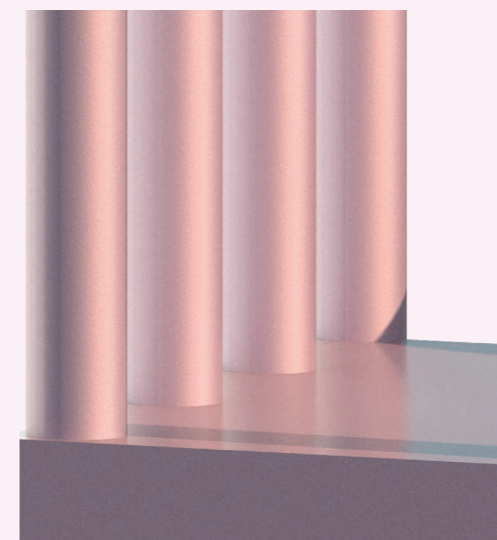


Duality of secret spaces - for a space to be secret it needs to be in relation to an open space

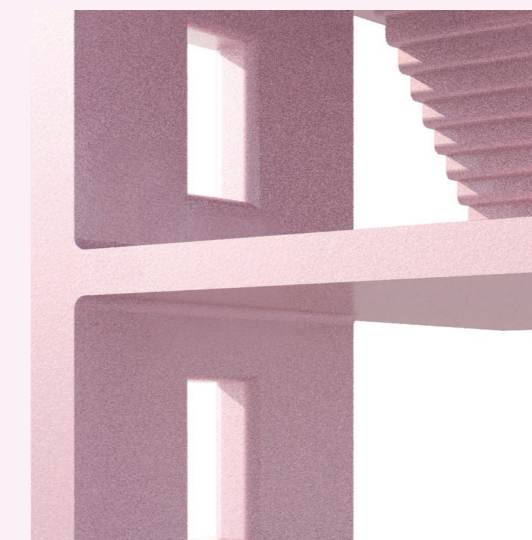
### HIDING ROOMS



Hiding rooms - inside what seem to be, but not necessary is, the "core", making them secret, creating spatial pochés (Eileen Gray E-1027).



ANTI-STERILE, soft shapes and monumental intimacy.



ANTI-STERILE, blur transitions and soften straight lines

### MOVING AROUND CORNERS



Moving around corners - working with tension, intimacy and dramaturgy. (Eileen Gray E-1027).

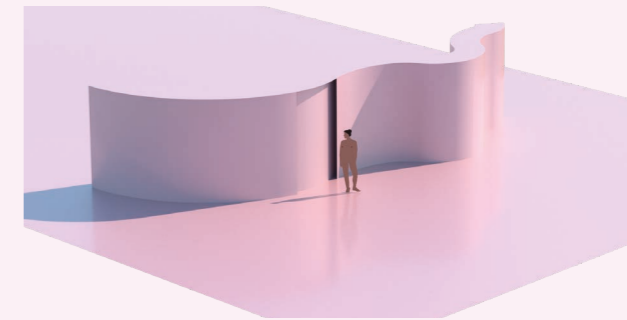
### ANTI-STERILE



Anti-sterile - Female symbolism; appropriating the shell, Venus and curyness as an opposite to straight lines, whiteness and sterility. The tool originates from early model studies and the survey.



*MOVING AROUND CORNERS*



*NIJIRAGUCI/BARRIER  
ESCAPE ROUTES*

**SECRET**

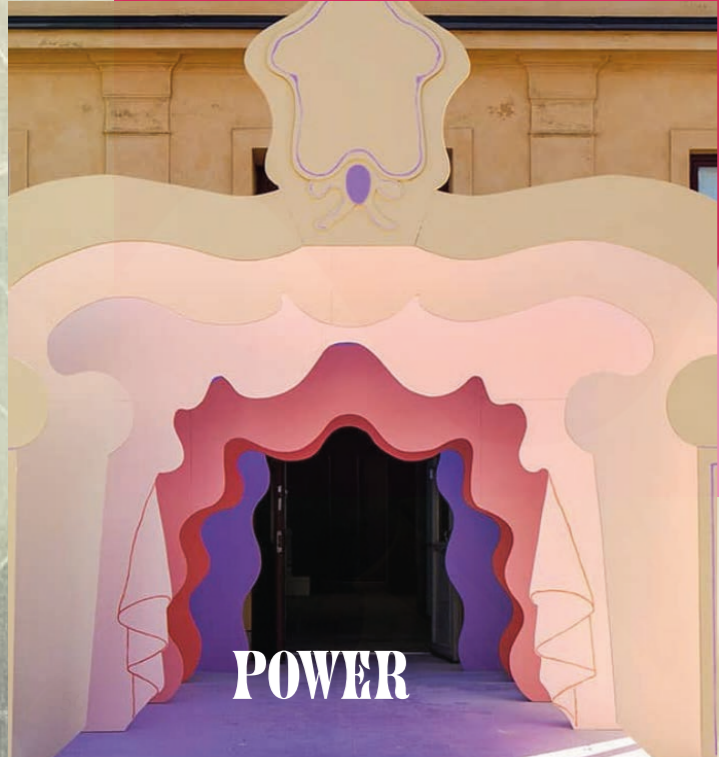
**OPEN**



**BOUDOIR**



**INTIMACY**



**POWER**

Fig. 11. mixed images

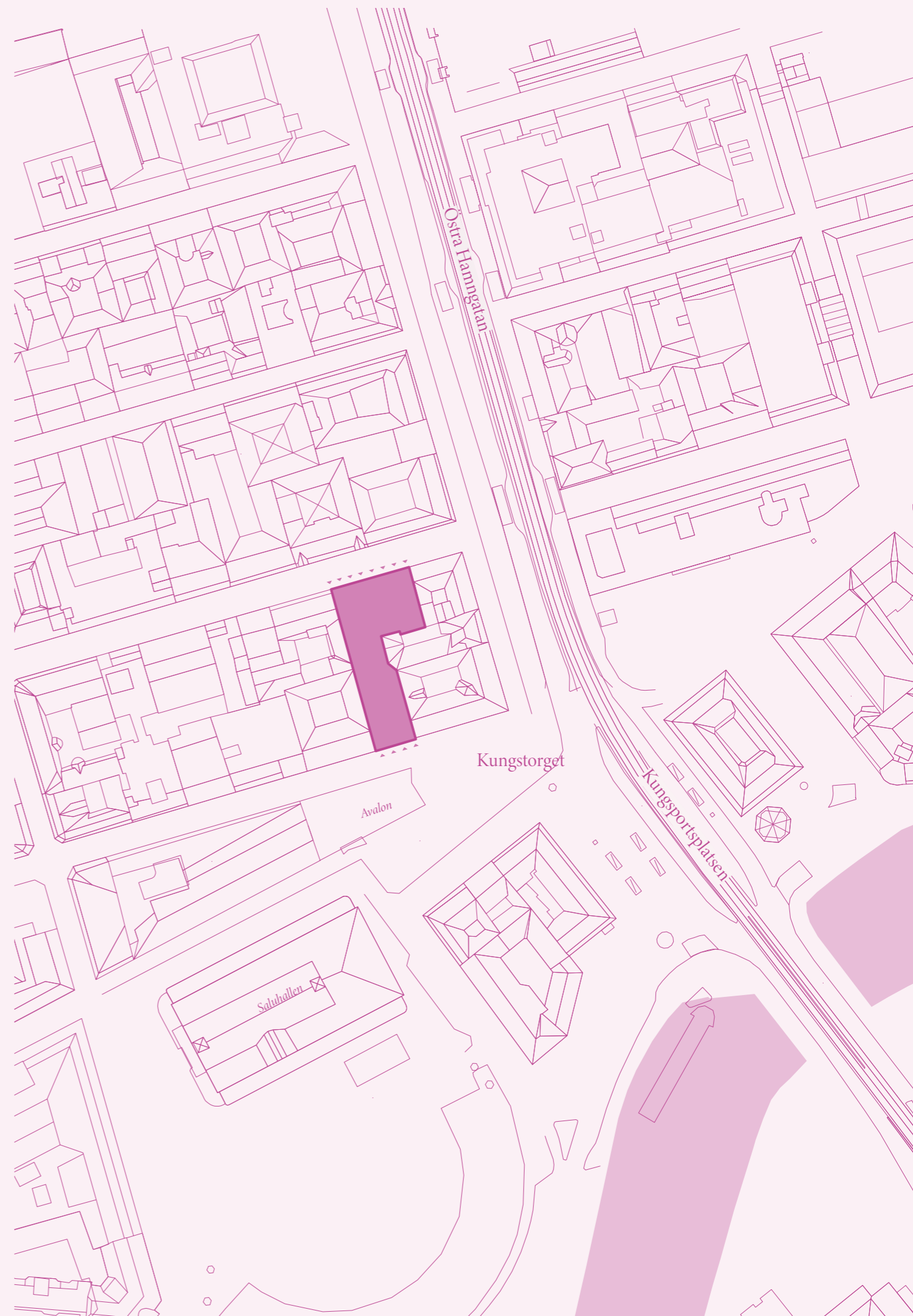
# 6. DESIGN ACT 2; PROPOSAL

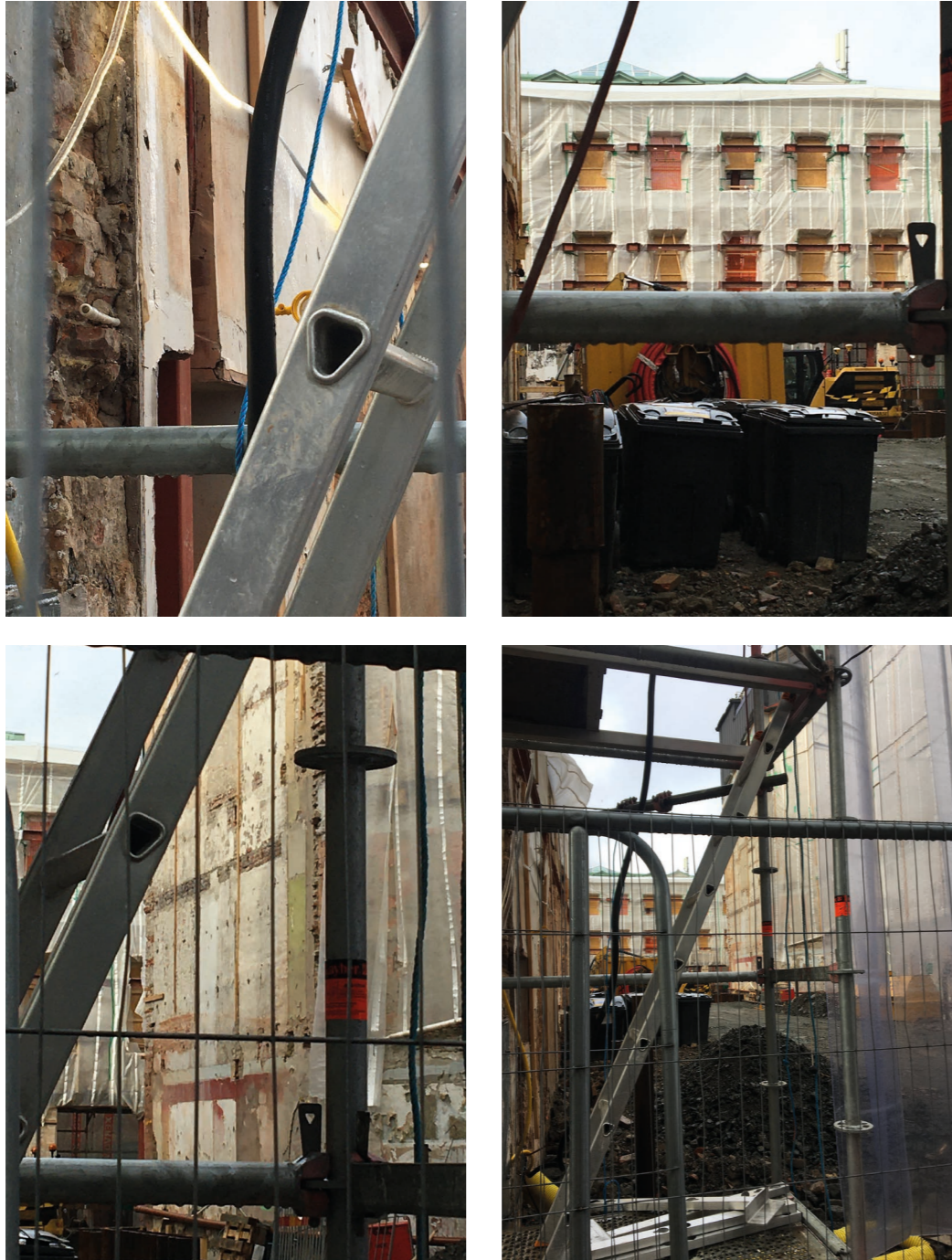
## THE SITE

The site is located in one of the most central parts of Gothenburg »Inom Vallgraven«. Originally it held the city fortifications, today it is a Mecca for consumerism. The area is pointed out as of national interest because of its cultural environment. The area is dense, reflecting Gothenburg's development from the cities birth until present day. In-between Vallgatan/Kungsgatan there is a big plot where McDonalds and H&M earlier were located. The three houses that stood there are now being removed, or have already been, creating a gap. The surrounding buildings are from the nineteenth century. To the left is Hermods gymnasiet, at the right two stores are located, one is a pharmacy. Across the street is Avalon Hotel built in 2007. Right next to the site is Kungstorget, a large square.

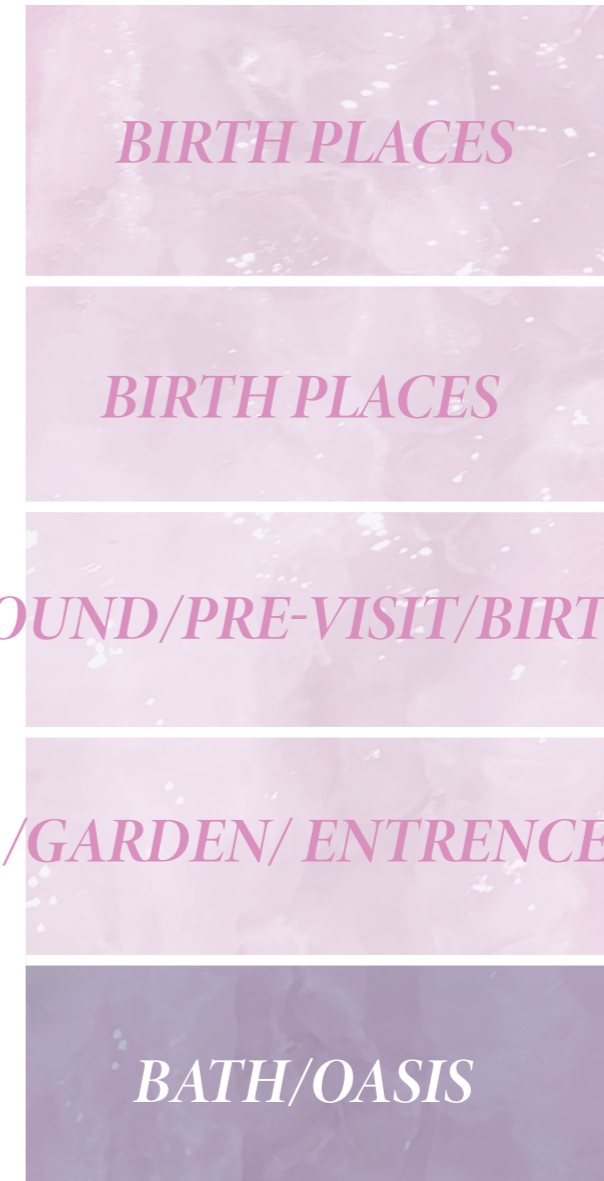
On the whole, one can question the demolition of houses in such a setting. The planes are to build a new flagship store for H&M but I want to propose something quite different, an oasis for life; A P(a)lace for Birth.

The P(a)lace for Birth is located in between the real and the ideal, between home and hospital and in between buildings. The project is speculating, questioning and making resistance by existing. It is not providing answers, rather initiating a dialogue.





Images from the site, the buildings are being demolished.



BIRTH PLACES

BIRTH PLACES

ULTRA SOUND/PRE-VISIT/BIRTH PLACES

PLAZA/GARDEN/ ENTRENCE / CAFÉ

BATH/OASIS

LEVELS

At the ground floor there is a plaza, a garden and a café. The the top three floors are for births and pre/post-birth visits. In the basement there is a hidden public bath.

# A P(A)LACE FOR BIRTH

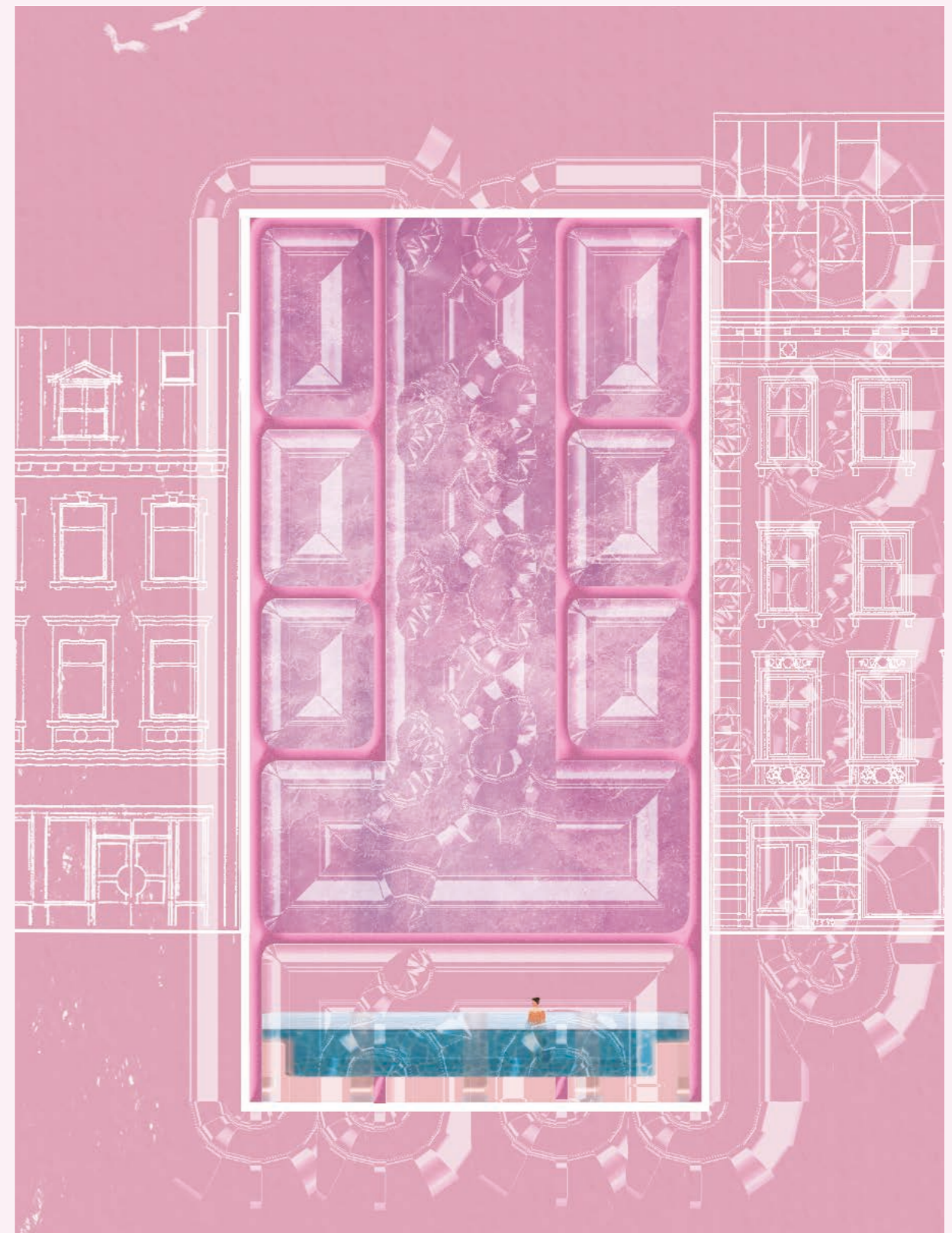
- Meeting the building -



**“IT SHALL FEEL CEREMONIAL”**

## SPECULATIVE FACADE

*The facade is showcasing the essence of the building. A celebration of life and birth. The facade is flirting with its classicist neighbours but is being loud, exaggerated and provocative in its expression.*



## SPECULATIVE SECTION / IMPACT ON SURROUNDINGS

- Public plaza - Central core - Hidden bath -



5 10 1:1 (A3)

## A P(A)LACE FOR BIRTH

### HOW ARE SECRETS APPLIED ON THE BIRTH CENTER?

The secrets in the context of the birthplace does not mean that the birth center is concealed, or that its location is hidden. No, in the birth center secrets are used as a design method for creating empowered spaces and shifting power structures, adding intimacy, warmth and sensuality.

### A CELEBRATORY PROJECT

*A P(a)lace for Birth* is a speculative project, celebrating birth and creating empowerment through the desires of women. By appropriating the language of the »important«, grand and spectacular, applying it on the birthplace and mixing it with secrets, intimacy and fleshiness, the monumental intimacy was created. Through monumental intimacy an alternative way for birth is suggested.

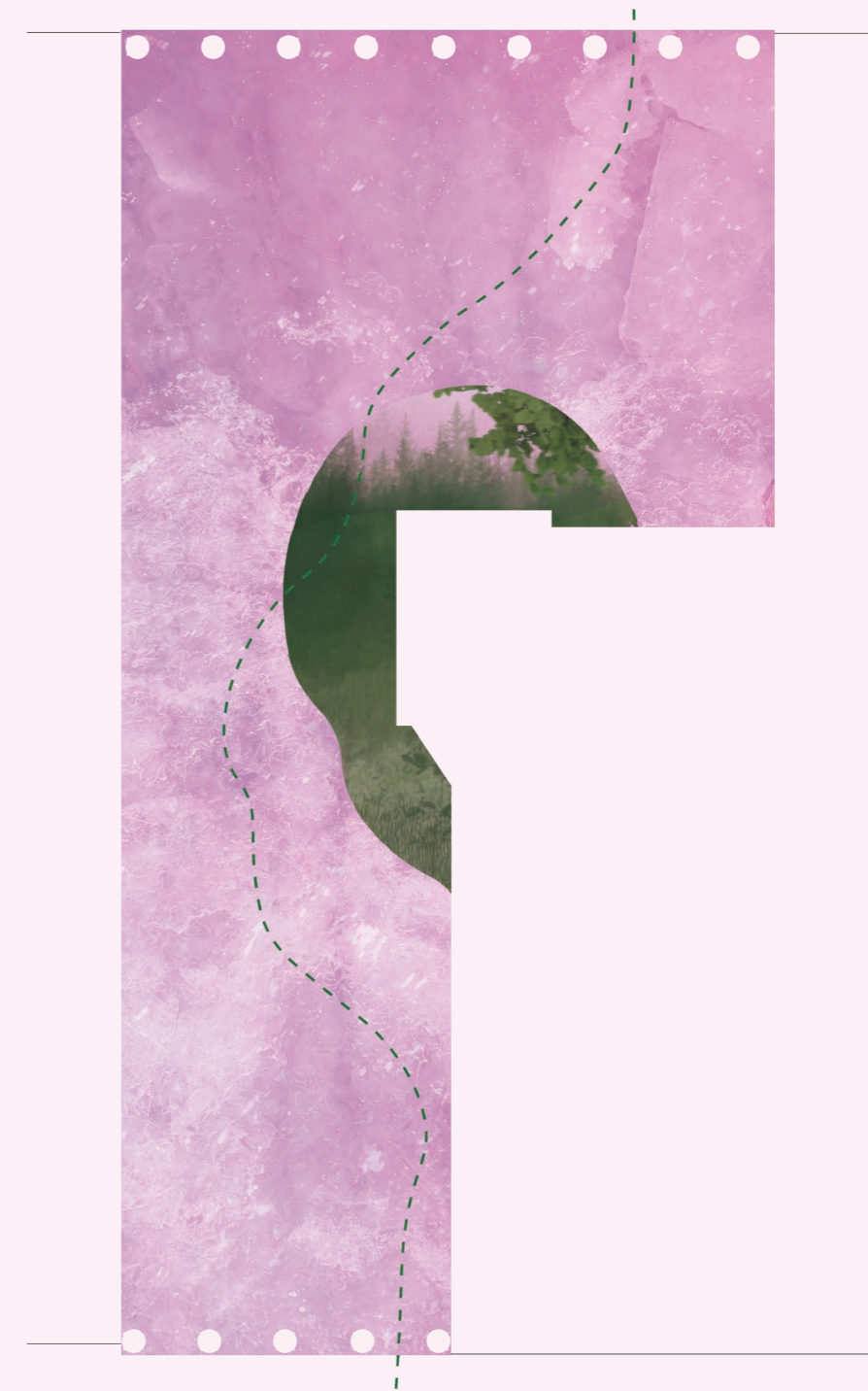
In its presence, by being an oasis, or palace, the project highlights what a hospital birth today is not. The project raises questions about what a place for birth can be, it is not providing a solution, but should be seen as a conversation piece.

### PROGRAM

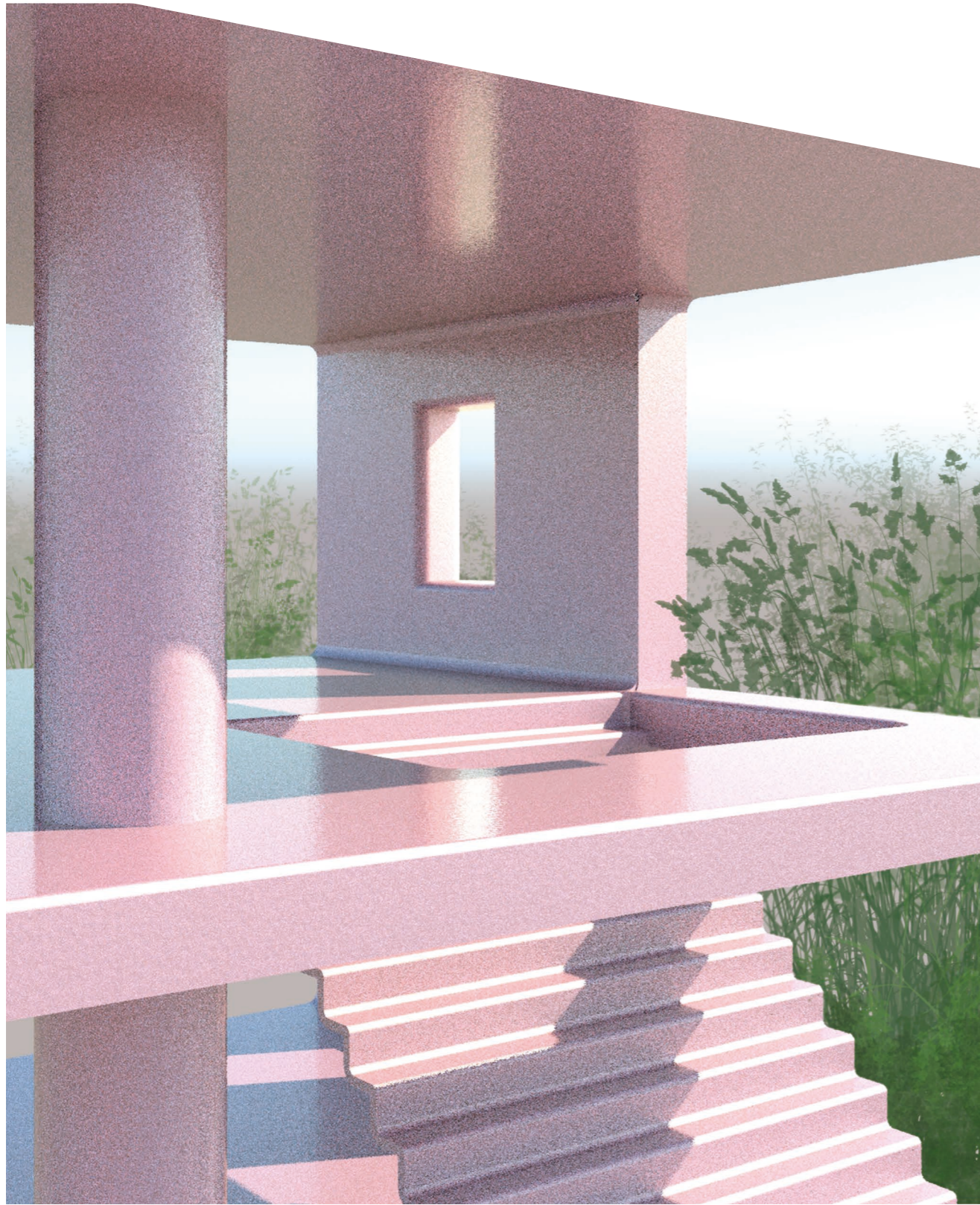
*A P(a)lace for Birth* is a holistic birth center where one can go pre, during and past pregnancy and birth. The holistic approach means one gets to know the staff and team as well as the surrounding area and spaces. Familiarity is important to create safety and trust, this was also something a lot of women asked for in the survey. In the bottom floor a public plaza is located together with a café and a garden. A hidden but public bath is situated in the basement. The three top floors are used as the birth center and for pre/post-partum visits.

### BIRTH ROOM

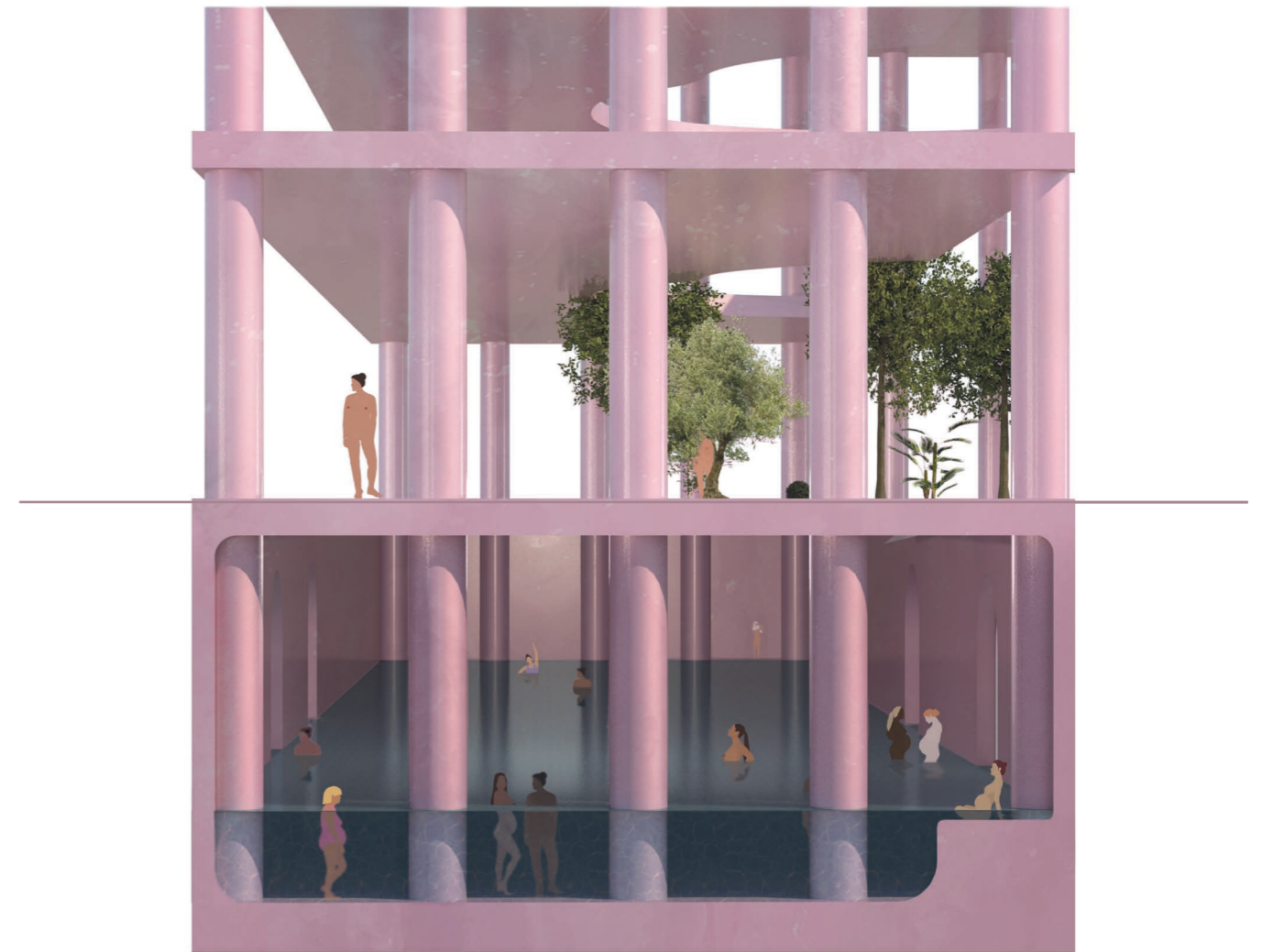
The birth rooms are large, and they all have an open and a secret space, »the nest«. In every room there is a birth pool as well as a balcony. In the survey it was important to have your family close by so the open part of the room is large and spacious, whilst the secret space is private, small and intimate. The rooms have both open main entrances combined with secret passages and escape routes.



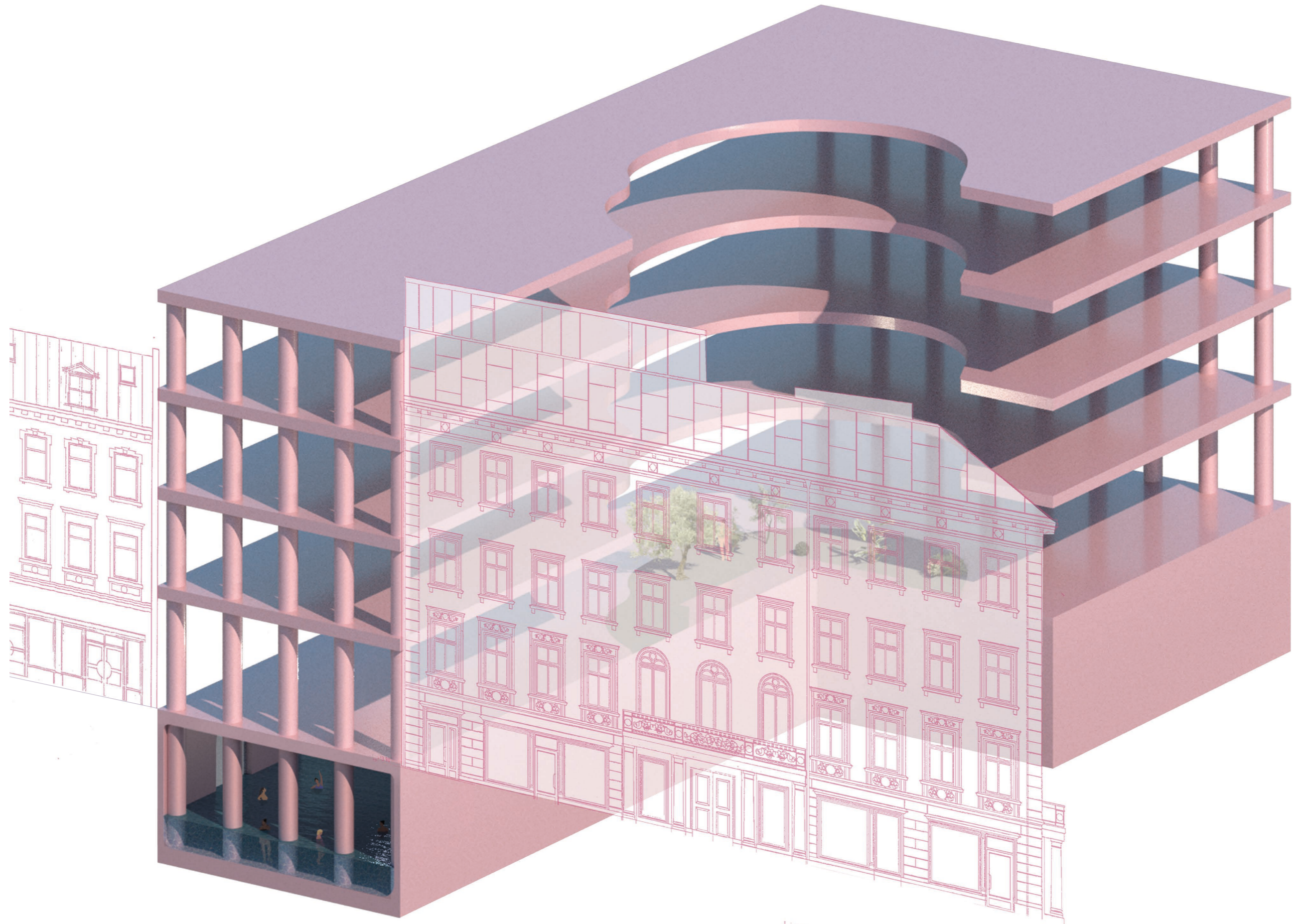
PLAZA, ground floor. Plan. 1:300

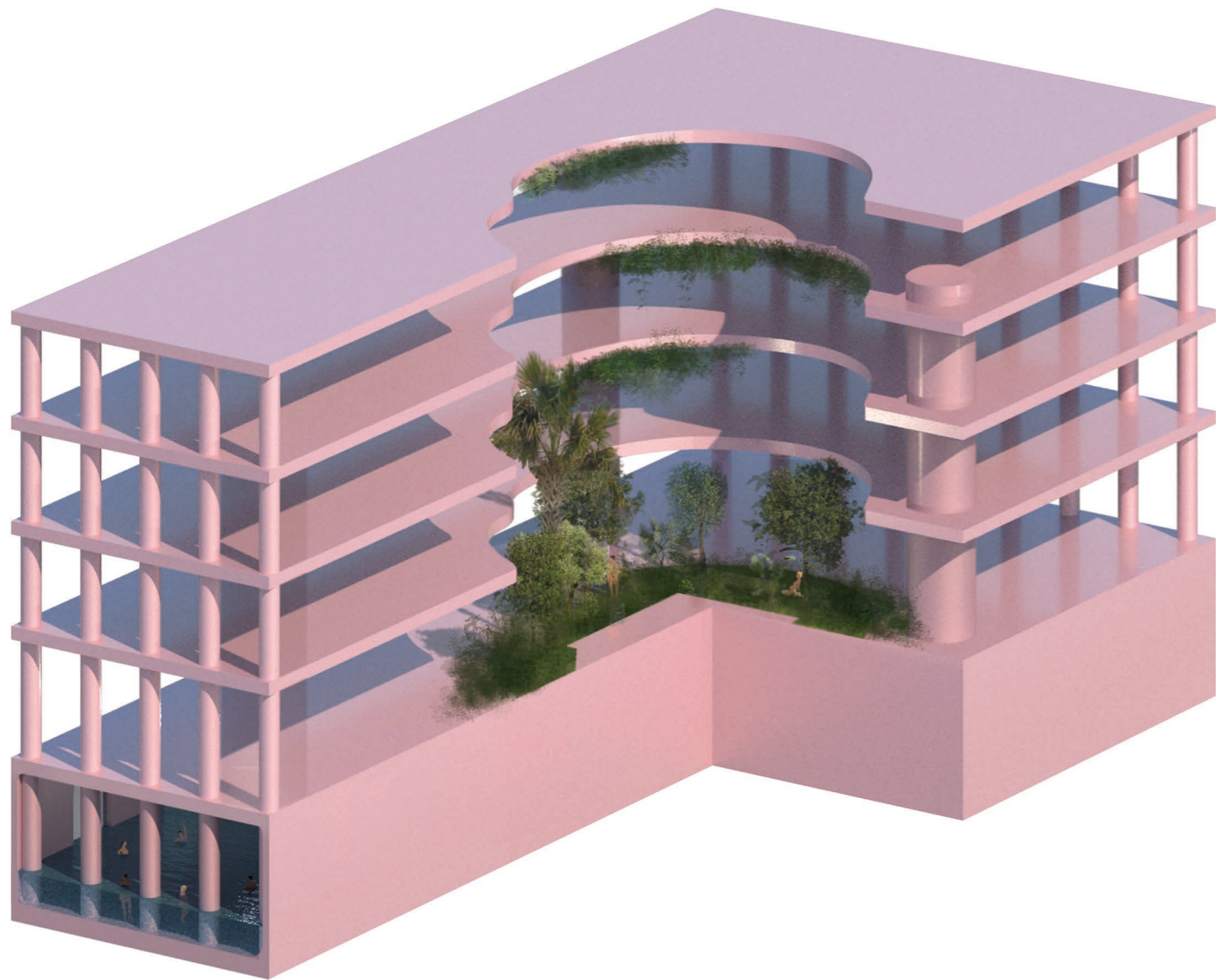


*SPECULATIVE PERSPECTIVE*



*Public plaza, hidden bath. Elevation south. 1:100*

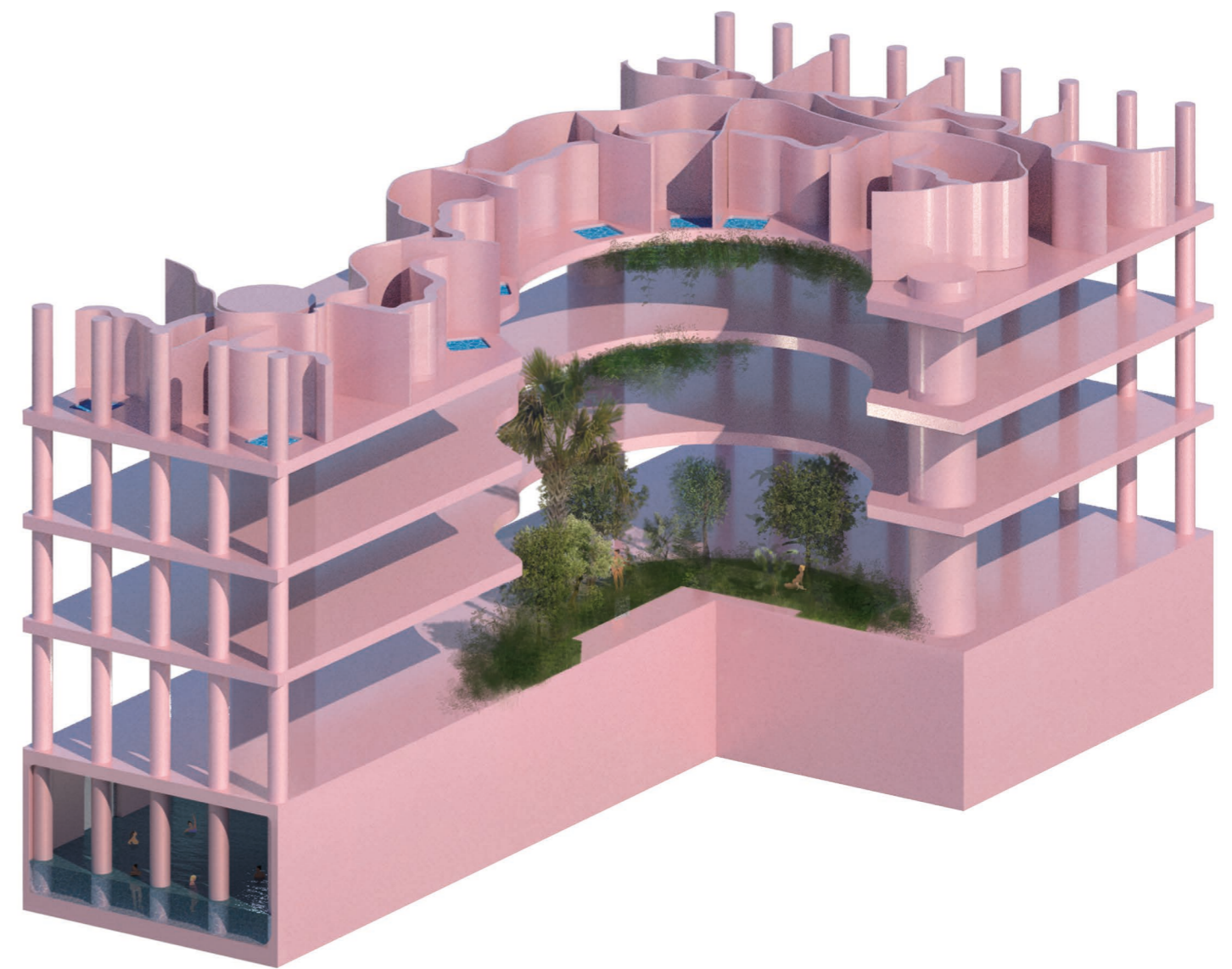




*AXONOMETRY*

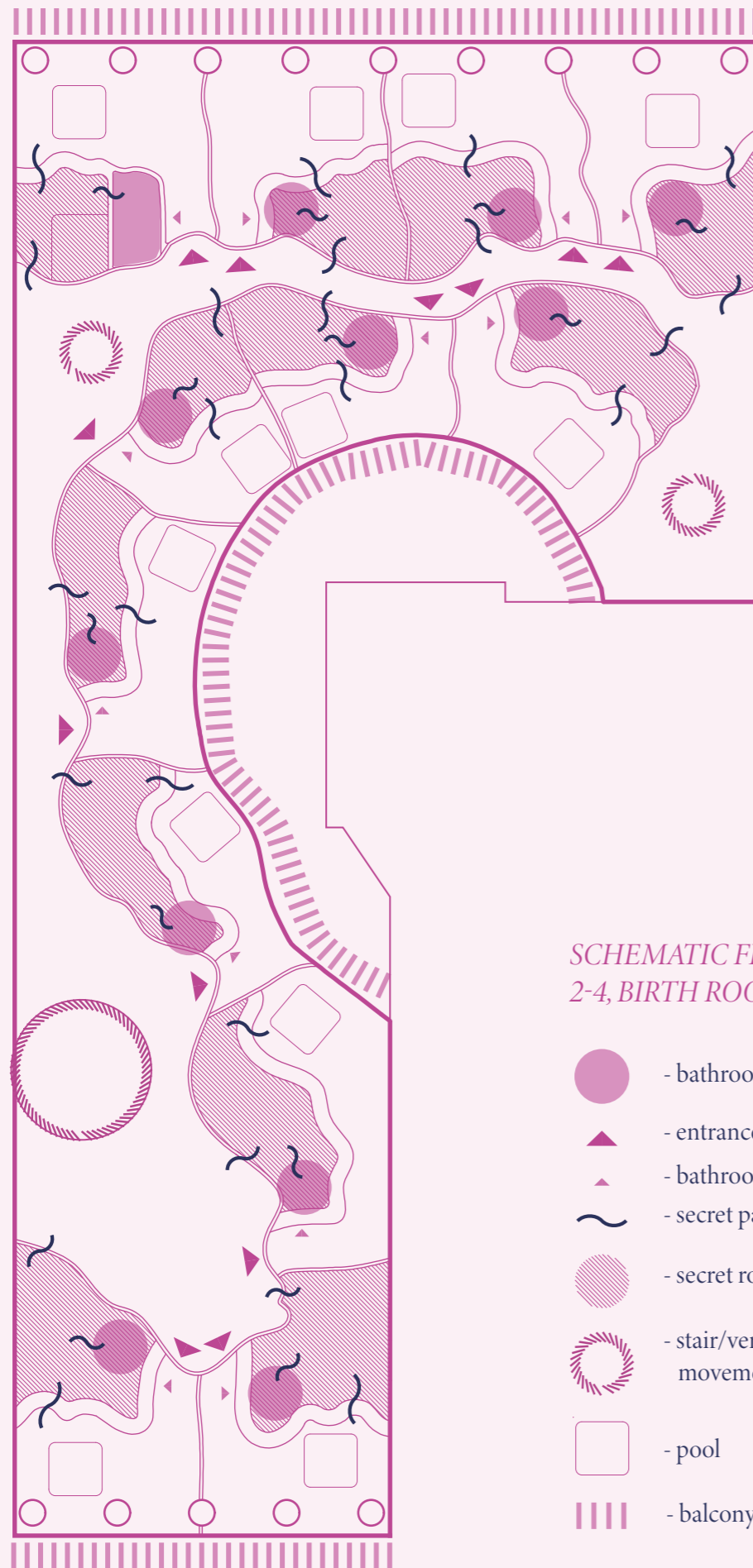
*A green oasis is located in the centre of the building.*

*“THE PLACE FEELS A BIT »SACRED«, LIKE A TEMPLE.”*








*BIRTH ROOMS, AXONOMETRY*

*The birth rooms are located at the three top floors.*

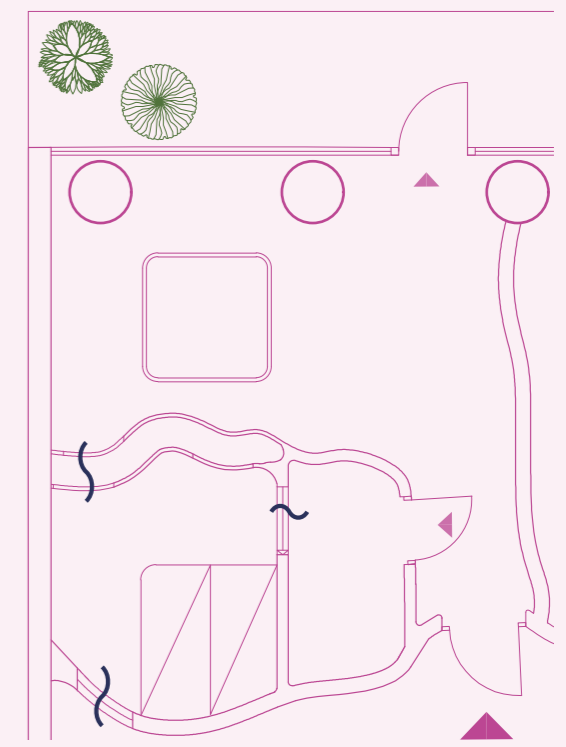


*SCHEMATIC FLOOR PLAN  
2-4, BIRTH ROOMS 1:200*

-  - bathroom
-  - entrance
-  - bathroom door
-  - secret passage
-  - secret room
-  - stair/vertical movement
-  - pool
-  - balcony

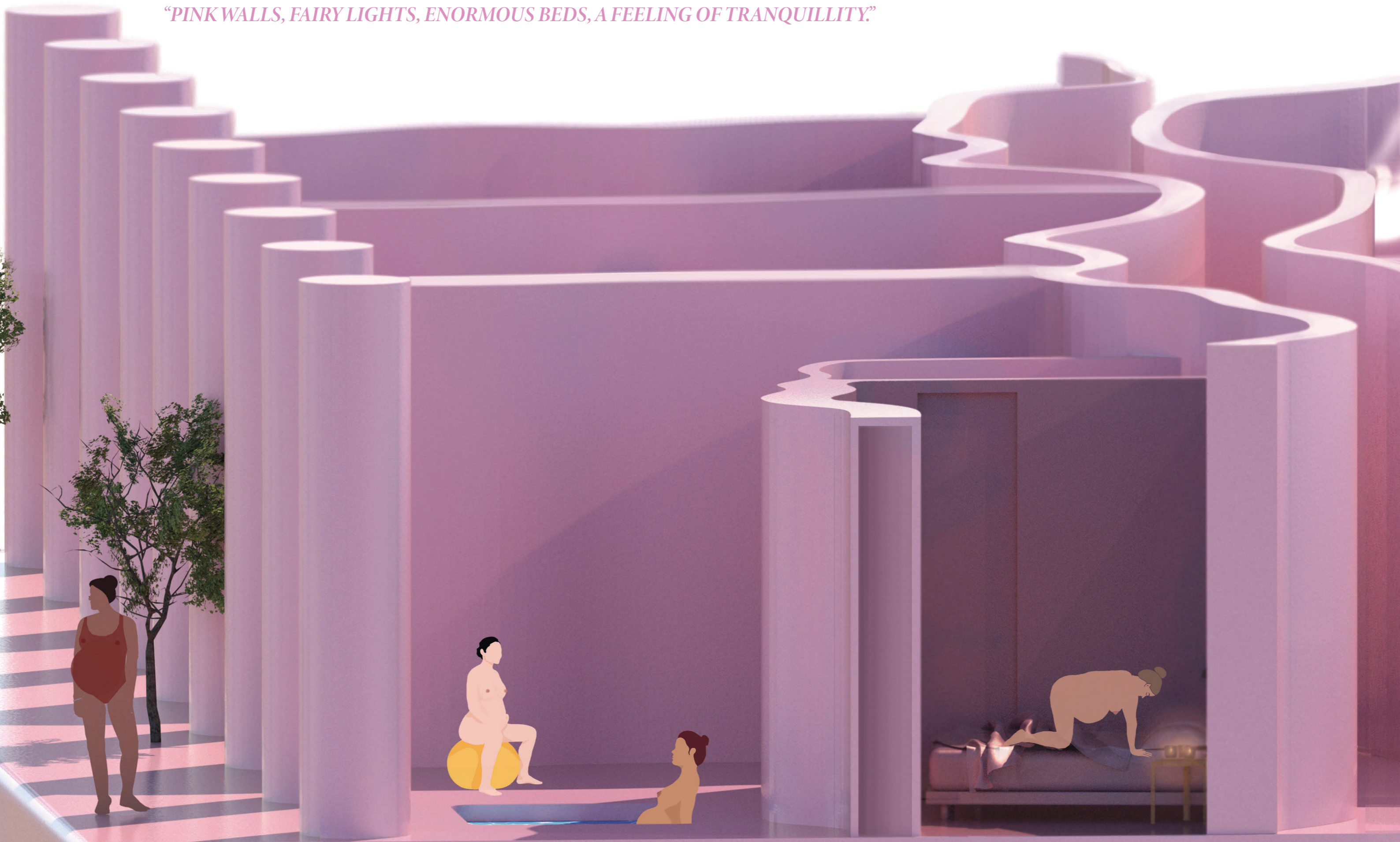


*PLAN 1:200*



*PLAN, BIRTH ROOM. 1:100*

*“PINK WALLS, FAIRY LIGHTS, ENORMOUS BEDS, A FEELING OF TRANQUILLITY.”*



*“NO VISIBLE TECHNIQUE, BEING ABLE TO NEST AND CREATE PRIVACY.”*

# 7. CONCLUSION

## DISCUSSION

In this project my ambition was to challenge power structures with the help of architecture through secret spaces.

The aim was to create a conversation piece through speculative- and provocative design. A design that questions existing power structures, who gets authority and access to certain spaces. I think this project does just that. The research of secret spaces was tested on a speculative building for childbirth, in central Gothenburg, placing it in a socio-political context.

I have identified that there are power structures in society and investigated if these can be challenged by architecture. I developed the tool of the secret room as a force of resistance, rather than a space. By creating »a room of one's own« I aim to dismantle norms and hierarchies. Later I identified the birth room as an environment surrounded by strong hierarchies and power imbalances. I then applied the secret room in the context of childbirth. This is an unorthodox way of approaching an architectural project; to not originate the study from the site, as we architects usually do. I developed a tool and then applied it to the context, not developed it from the site itself. I did not even have a site until halfway into the project. This was a first for me, and a totally new way of working with a project. By refusing to use the »master's tools« (»The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.«) I make

it possible to break free from existing power structures. The secret room and the new context enabled a shift in power and an empowerment of both the birth and birth space. I thereby changed the scene of action, establishing a new typology and creating a new narrative with P(a)lace for birth.

A thesis work should aim at making a contribution to the discourse of architecture. So what have my work contributed with?

By the use of unconventional methods and bold design expressions my work aims at challenging what architecture is, not obeying by architectural norms, or societal. The project is speculative and provocative evoking themes of sensuality, secrecy and intimacy in connection to the act of births.

Opposed to architecture as »provider of truth«, and permanent matter, the project aspires to open up for discussion and questions, rather than providing answers.

It is avant-garde to apply the study of the secret room as a tool for empowerment at a birth center. This thesis could easily have been applied to multiple contexts and executed in many ways. However, it was important to me for my project to be urgent and applied in a socio-political contemporary context.

There is an obvious need for this kind of space and for the voices of women to be taken seriously in this debate. The developed tool of secret spaces can now be applied in many more areas in need of transformation, than a birth center.

The methods of developing this thesis have had to adopt, as well as its outputs. My initial thought for the final result was to create a full-scale installation of the secret room with a clear connection to intimate and fleshy spatialities to interact with. This ambition was sadly lost to the pandemic.

One of the key aspects of this process was the survey collecting the desires of women for a new kind of birthplace, in what later became a P(a)lace for birth. Their stories made the secret space, real, rooted and, to some extent, co-created. By translating and interpreting their stories, they filled my project with desires. These women are activating and populating this thesis.

During my studies I have come to look upon architecture as a tool to create change, rather than just create spaces. I think my thesis reflects this point of view.

## REFLECTION

I was afraid in the picking of a subject for my thesis in architecture that I would grow a bit tired of it - However, secret spaces have always been a fascination of mine, and it have not decreased during this spring.

The work has, I must admit, not been quite as I imagined my thesis to be, due to the pandemic. Something I thought was beneficial, and fun, in my first Matter Space Structure-course where the many physical exhibitions. I used the exhibitions as tools to test my material, display and discuss. Though we have had digital ones it has not been quite the same. During this thesis work I have also understood how my creative process works. How fragile it is, how important those small-talks are in the cafeteria, or the impressions collected during the walk to school in the mornings. I am so glad of the enthusiasm this thesis has evoked, especially in the response from all the participants in my study.

On the first page I quoted Foucault:  
*The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a ~~book~~ thesis what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it?*

I knew I wanted to go about my thesis in a different way, interlinking mysteries, the magical aspect of the secret room with feminism, intimacy and norm critique. This thesis has been a really personal project for me, demanding courage. The subject is close to heart, has triggered me and made me take unexpected roads. That I would be making a speculative center for childbirth, a P(a)lace for birth, was not anticipated from the start. This project has in some way turned into an homage to my great grandmother who was hospitalized and lobotomized in the 1940s, subsequent to a post-partum depression after giving birth to my grandma. Those sterile and hostile environments she must have endured for many years have evoked a feeling of resentment in me. It fills me with satisfaction to within this project be able to create a new story for births, a rebirth.

## THANKS!

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*Frej, for endless love and support.*

*Finally, to all the amazing people, mostly women, for sharing their hopes and wishes with me for a future birthplace. I feel truly privileged. I hope one*

## STUDENT BACKGROUND

### EDUCATION

#### **Master in Architecture and Urban Design**

Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg. 2019 - 2021

Design and planning for social inclusion, 2020  
*Co-designing renovation in Angeredsgymnasiet*

Housing Inventions, 2020  
Densification project, 'Treetop', wooden house in Landala

Matter Space Structure, 2019  
Wet Narratives, 'The Feed of Floatation'

#### **Handelshögskolan,**

School of Economics, Gothenburg. 2018

#### **Bachelor in Architecture**

Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg. 2015-2019

### EMPLOYMENT

Sales, Marimekko, Gothenburg.

January 2018 -

*Art Director*, Promotion, Gothenburg

2019 - 2020, 11 months

*Chairman*, Recruitment Group for Architecture.

2016-2017, 1 year

*Unit Manager*. Gröna Lunds tivoli AB, Stockholm.

2015-2017, summer employment

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# APPENDIX

## QUOTES FROM STUDY

*I have been following Asabea Britton, a midwife, on Instagram, for quite some time. Last year she was won 'educator of the year' by Mama. She gave birth to her second child at home. I contacted her and through her platform people could send in their wants and wishes for a future birth place located between home and hospital. The statement was "Of a future birth place I would like..." and they could fill in whatever they liked.*

*I received 528 answers from 381 individuals. I think the quotes shows the stories behind the statistics, every situation is unique and I found that so very important. Most of them are interlinked but I have tried to categorize them. After the quotes follows the statistic in graphs.*

### OASIS/TEMPLE

*"It shall feel ceremonial."*

*"The place feels a bit "sacred", like a temple."*

*"A little dim and dark but spiritual. A lot of flicking candles. Smell fresh, lemon grass?"*

*"Pure luxury, spa and a fruit tray. I want to feel like a goddess!"*

*"Social area, like an oasis, with a fountain where women gather and share their experiences."*

### SOFT SHAPES

*"A soft feel in the entire building. Thick curtains."*

*"Round and soft shapes, warm colours and textiles that embrace and encloses you."*

*"Bath, a lot of water, warmer temperature, round, soft shapes and dimmed light."*

*"Round shapes, they feel cozy and inviting."*

*"Soft welcoming shapes and lights. Soundproof. Aesthetic. Warmth."*

*"Rooms without boundaries."*

*"Soft fabrics along the walls."*

### PRIVACY/NESTING/INTIMACY

*"Privacy! Calm, separate, an anonymous entrance."*

*"Opportunity to change the room itself, with fabric/movable furniture/objects. Large area to move around on in. Able to move from openness to intimacy. "*

*"No visible technique, being able to nest and create privacy. "*

*"Like a 'cave' but with natural light and air. Organic shapes, calm colours, birth pool."*

*"Calm and separate. Dark and radiance of security."*

*“Pink walls, fairy lights, enormous beds, a feeling of tranquillity.”*

*“A calm, intimate environment. Light, airy and warm.”*

*“Private and shielded, maybe even a separate entrance.”*

*“Opportunity to get massage and tactile touch during labor.”*

### **DARKNESS:**

*“Small rooms, with opportunity to darkness. Opportunity to open a window or door to the outside. A bathtub.”*

*“Dark with burning candles, a large bed.”*

*“A soft bath or pool in a dark room with lit candles and nice music.”*

*“Bath to give birth in. Walls painted in dark colours. The opportunity to light candles. Windows with greenery outside.”*

*“Muted and darker colours in the birth room, cozy and non-clinical.”*

### **BATH/WATER**

*“Maybe obvious but a bath, it should be big enough to move around in <3”*

*“Access to water, nature and soft materials and colours.”*

*“Bath in the birth room itself, not in the bathroom.”*

*“Water! Peace and quiet is most important.”*

*“The opportunity to give birth in water – my partner should be allowed to sleep next to me in a bed.”*

*“Bath for birth, spa, different places for labor; lianas, pilates ball, stool, bed, sofa.”*

*“Water, plants, beautiful, airy and calm.”*

*“Luxurious bath, darkness, sound isolation. Eventual medical equipment hidden, soft furniture, dim light, things to hang in and over.”*

### **NON-HOSPITAL/NON-WHITE**

*“Above all, colours and interiors that does not feel institutionalized. Large room so that a lot of people can be with me without feeling in the way.”*

*“As far away from the feeling one gets from the word ‘clinic’.”*

*“Candles, soft pastel colours, no things that feel ‘hospital-y’, soft pillows.”*

*“Cozy interiors, getting rid of the hospital feel once and for all. Absolutely no curtains with ‘Dala horses’ from Ikea!!!”*

*“Not white – cozy.”*

*“Soft lights. Being able to take a bath, not feeling de-gradated to a patient. Not being interrupted all the time.”*

*“Everything is on the conditions of the one who is giving birth.”*

*“Soft and smooth materials. Plants. Warm lighting, with the opportunity to dim. No white walls. Colourful. A café where your sister is bossing.”*

*“Completely silent. No hospital sounds. No machines at all, no disturbing ventilation that thunders on. Warm lights and colours and a large bath.”*

*“Calm secluded but with support close by. No blue lights, no screens, no beeping.”*

*“Calm, warm colours, possibility to dim light. Make all hospital things ‘invisible’ but accessible.”*

*“Warm lights with dimmer in the rooms, so you can choose for yourself. Real towels in the bathroom that are being washed, instead of all those paper towels.”*

*“Muted colour scheme. Hidden ‘hospital things’, bath. No sticky floors.”*

*“Nothing plastic or white. Nice plants, café, BATH and no fluorescent lamps.”*

*“Non-sterile. Familiar. More opportunities to give birth as one wishes. Large, so there is room for everyone.”*

*“Room in warm, calm colours. As ‘unsterile’ as possible. Pillows. Textile etc.”*

*“The feeling of safety/normality. Not the feeling of a sterile hospital. Feel at home and comfortable moving around in the room. Our room, the midwife is visiting.”*

*“The lighting shall feel pleasant and ‘friendly’. Nothing white in the interior.”*

### **HOLISTIC/ COMMUNITY**

*“It should be familiar, so it should be possible to visit the room before.”*

*“Holistic! It shall feel like a warm, safe hug of knowledge and love.”*

*“A place to go throughout your entire pregnancy. A place where the one’s giving birth get support.”*

*“What if you could go to pregnancy yoga/ water aerobics at the same space? I think it would really help the oxytocin to flow!”*

*“Same midwife that follows my entire pregnancy, driven by a supportive group.”*

*“Physiotherapists and Osteopath, a holistic view on health and pregnancy”*

*“Everything at the same space, holistic. Imaging to be able to come to a known place when there is time to give birth.”*

*“A room with comfy bed. Cozy lightning. Bath. A midwife I know.”*

*“Someone is there all the time, so you don’t have to feel annoying when you are pushing that button.”*

*“A place you go the entire pregnancy that is safe and familiar. Water birth is possible in every room. Physiotherapist, baby swim, ‘BVC’ so you can come back after. Clean courtyard for parents, unborn/newborn babies.”*

*“Bath, big windows and nature. Dining room to meet others. Gym with rehab personal.”*

*“Midwife, MVC, BB and after care at the same space. Here in Malmö my only opportunity to check when something felt wrong was sitting at the emergency room, does not feel tempting with a two-week-old.”*

*“A place you go the entire pregnancy that is safe and familiar.”*

## GREENARY/GARDEN/NATURE

*“Greenery, calmness, access to bath, nice food. No hospital smells.”*

*“I think of closeness to beautiful nature and outdoor environment. Large windows, balcony and I would love a garden. I dilated with my first hanging in a tree outside SÖS. It was the best place.”*

*“Possibility to access a secluded garden to take labor pains in. With plants and trees, water and benches. I love the smell of trees, can you have extra of that?”*

*“Opportunity to nature, plants, garden, streaming water, trees, sky. A beautiful view and natural sounds.”*

*“Nature. Pictures on other pregnant giving birth from all over the world - that gives me strength.”*

*“To be able to give birth outside in a garden.”*

## SPA/RELAX

*“Imagine a spa! With midwives!”*

*“Relaxing, like walking into a spa, birth pool and soft floors.”*

*“Spa-feel. Warm colours, lit candles, nice scents, rounded shapes, a pool and a large bed.”*

*“A place of tranquillity, calm, music, candles, warmth, harmony, the opportunity to take a bath.”*

*“Spa-feel. Darkness. Warmth. No visible technology. Water. Calm music. Acupuncture. Massage. Affirmations. Textiles. Separate rooms. Pillows.”*

*“Spa-feel, calm, open fire, water.”*

*“Peace and quiet. Time, Warmth. Love. Bath.”*

## SPACE FOR FAMILY/PARTNER

*“Family and friends <3 “*

*“Designed with the partner in mind as well. The bed is big for both of us, I like having my partner close to me.”*

*“Double bed so my partner can lay next to me. Natural colours and materials. Paintings/mantra in the ceiling.”*

*“A large soft big bed where partner, baby, mother and siblings, everyone fits.”*

*“Time for recovery together.”*

*“The possibility to be close to partner, meaning no single bed.”*

*“Calm colours, smells, soft light, bath, non-hospital-environment. The possibility to have the ones you want in the room, children, friend, mother or doula.”*

## SPECIFIC SPACES/ MOVEMENT BETWEEN SPACES

*“My own bathroom! I thought It was so stressful to share during labor.”*

*“My own bathroom, not out in some corridor!”*

*“The possibility to move between outside and inside, access to pool, nature, earth and trees.”*

## NATURAL LIGHT

*“Windows from floor to ceiling. Incredible calm, warm and easy to breath. Almost bird twitter in the room, like you are giving birth to spring.”*

*“A lot of light from the outside, maybe water close by. Earthy colours.”*

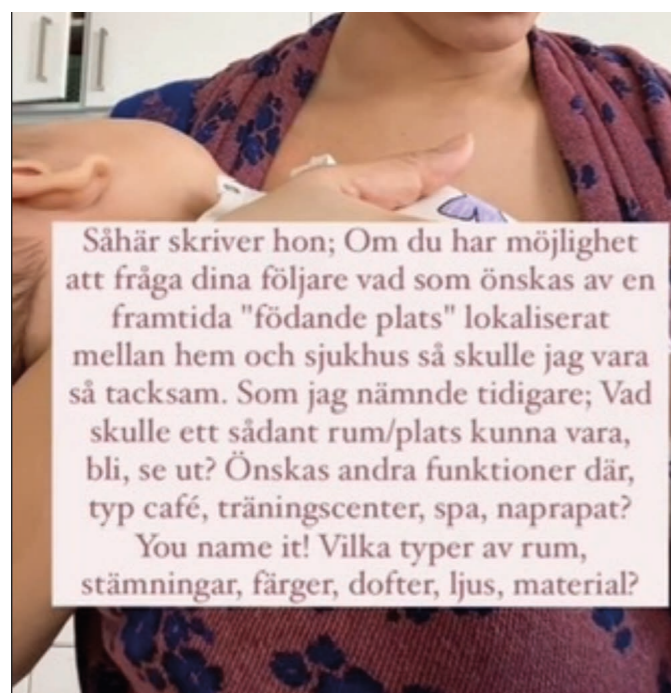
*“Windows and natural light! I gave birth to my first child in a room without a window. It was awful!”*



Translation: "Good morning guys! Could you help me with something? Or help me help someone. I have been contacted by a person who is attending their last year at the architecture program at Chalmers"



Translation: "She is doing her thesis work on a birthing place located between hospital and home. She explained much more advanced than that, but sort of. She asked me to ask you what you would like from a place like that."



Translation: "She writes like this; If you have the opportunity to ask your followers what they would wish of a "birthing place" located between home and hospital I would be so grateful. As I mentioned; What would a room/place like that look like or be like? Do you wish for other facilities? Like a café, work out-center, spa, naprapat? What kind of rooms, atmospheres, colours, smells, lights, materials?"



Translation: "If you have any thoughts, please write in the (not in DM) and I shall make shore to pass it on to Johanna, Thank you for your help!"

Of a future birthing place I would like...."

## PRESENTING STUDY

Study through a midwife with 381 participants

Biggest requests:

- Bathtub in birth room 42,5 %
- The possibility to change/dim light 31%
- Dark colours 25%
- Safe environment 19,7%
- "Home-feel" 18,1%
- Nice food 17,39%
- Spa/hotel-feel 16%
- Room for family 11,8 %
- Non sterile 10,8 %

When making the images for the speculative birth p(a)lace it was important to me for the images to be populated by pregnant women and births. Births are omnipresent and something that connects all humanity – still I could hardly find any images of births, or scale figures that were pregnant. So, I decided to make them myself

I want the scale figures to be empowered, show representation and diversity. Also, I hope the scale figures represent the women participating in the study.

