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Vesseled Cultures; Figures of Diasporic Comforts

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VESSELED CULTURES

figures of diasporic comforts

ying na li / rachel ly / skylar sun

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DESCRIPTION

Contemporary Chinese American diasporas are disconnected with their practices through years of assimilation and generational passage, enhanced by a lack of access to Chinese culture despite emerging global communities. In order to combat this lack of connection, we aim to analyze the engagement with practice through adapting these processes for the younger generation to understand. How can diasporas connect to their culture through means of nonconventional "adaptable traditions"? Our thesis focuses on looking at the ritual of food making - specifically pickling - as a living means and methods of altering reconnection to one's heritage through its routine.

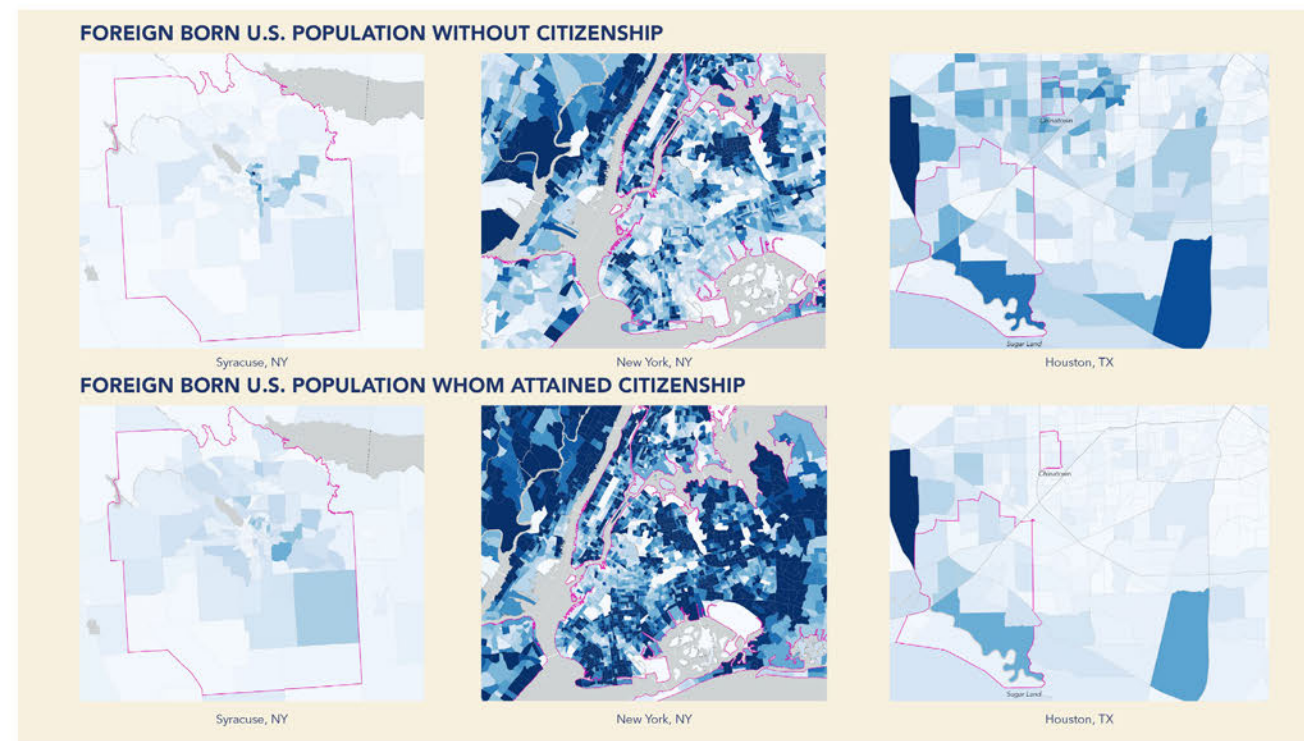
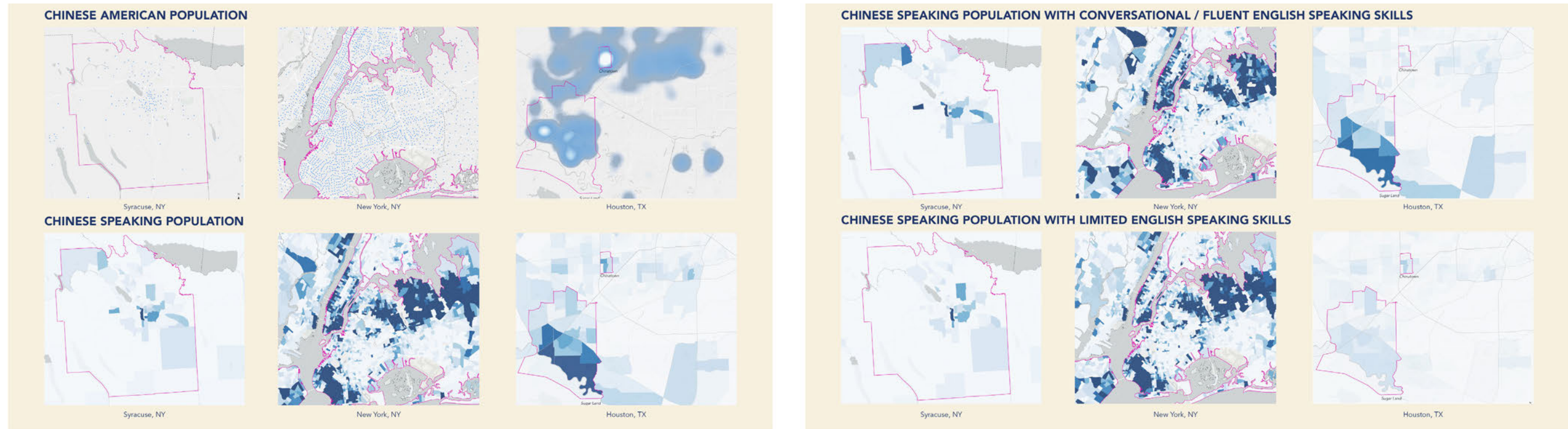
The process of pickling is one that spans over periods of time - sometimes taking years - in order to ferment into an edible, valuable product. The act of pickling vegetables is seen as a key aspect of our project as means of architectural intervention, in its interactions with instruments within the kitchen landscape and the memories associated with the routine of food making. The process itself is typically a singular and internal process restricted by the existing kitchen's space, something we aimed to combat by encouraging a collective and communal experience. Drawing inspiration from a variety of provocative furniture and mobile sculptural precedents, such as Llamas and Kiesler, this Trojan horse assemblage transfigures the traditional domestic sphere. Through a system of interlocking and nested parts, the cart acts as vessel for diasporic memory and a catalyst for emergent identities, particularly in sites that lack common centers of

cultural exchange. It's a device for disrupting binaric categories such as individual/collective and inside/outside.

Architectural extrapolation is then seen in our project manipulating this domestic performance through the setting and instruments encapsulated in the feast, specifically on the one to one scale from the individual and their devices. Our intent is to physically defamiliarize this setting and practice of food making through the construction of the mobile cart and the vessels. Our design is then an instrument of reconciliation, a living heirloom providing comfort in the practices it details.



SITE ANALYSIS



Syracuse is an ideal site since there is a lack of Chinese American presence and is optimal for us to test out our proposed methodologies with the intention of designing objects and environments encouraging communal and cultural revitalization.

RESEARCH

Singular Pickling



This slide starts the analysis of the singular experience of pickling and how much one person (meaning one of us at a time) constantly has to multitask in the kitchen.

RESEARCH

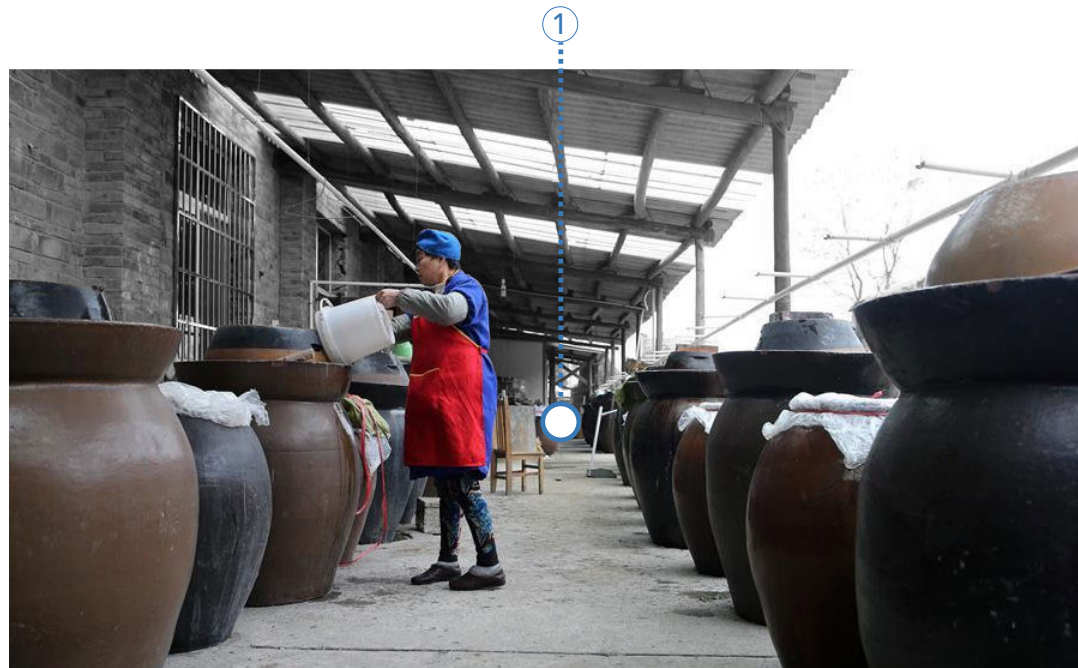
Collective Pickling



These images record the collective process of pickling and the intersection of activities and movements within shared spaces. Certain spaces called for small short social gatherings during and in between the pickling process - something we either wanted to celebrate or delegate spatially.

RESEARCH

Jars



1. Traditional Chinese Fermentation Crock Pot via Google

(TSL Agricultural Company in Changsha, 2018)

+ traditional chinese fermentation crock pots - able to hold many vegetables and other products with a lot of brine (for example, hard alcohol)

- very big (to the point that you need another person to wield it with you) as a unit, requires a lot of water and material to create and maintain

2. Fermentation 01 (Leong Leong Architects, 2019)

+ a demonstration piece focusing on the formation of jars and the act of fermentation (as a demonstration) at the MAK Center

- performative practice of domestic ritual with aim to appeal to a wider audience through lack of identity

3. Results from Searching on "Chinese Fermentation Jars" (Amazon, Modern Day)

+ functional, cheaper than "actual" fermentation pot

- lack of cultural identity, turning away from clay construction, no exploration of form for utility

Porcelain Pickling Jar with 2 Lids Lotus Fermenting Pickling Kimchi Crock Food Storage 7"

jojofun Ceramic Pickles Jar Fermenting Jar Dining Table Pickets Containers Fermentation Crock Jar Fermenting Pickling Pot for Healthy...

Fermentation Crock Asian-Style 2 Liter (0.5 Gallon) Water Sealed Jar, Lid and Glazed Weights - For Fermenting Sauerkraut, Kimchi and...

Fermentation Kit for Wide Mouth Jars - 4 Airllocks, 4 Silicone Grommets, 4 Stainless Steel Wide mouth Mason Jar Fermenting Lids with Silicone...

Large Traditional Chinese Glass Fermenting Jar with Water Seal Airlock Lid, Glass Fermentation Crock for Pickling, Kimchi, Sauerkraut, an...

Burp Lids Curing Kit - Fits All Wide Mouth Mason Jar Containers - A Home Harvesting Essential. 4 lids + extraction pump. Vacuum sealed fo...

Burp Lids 12 Pack Curing Kit - Fits All Wide Mouth Mason Jar Containers - A Home Harvesting Essential. 12 lids + extraction pump. Vacuum sealed fo...

Trellis + Co. Stainless Steel Fermentation Jar Kit | 3 Waterless Fermenter Airlock Lids & 3 Pickle Helix Fermentation Weights, For...

Porcelain Pickling Jar with 2 Lids Fermenting Pickling Kimchi Crock Food Storage Blue Cherry Blossom (10.9)

HEMOTON Traditional Chinese Food Fermenting Jar, with Water Seal Airlock Lid Glass Fermentation Crock for Pickling Kimchi Sauerkraut and...

Cablock Glass Fermenting Jar Traditional Chinese Fermentation Crock with Water Seal Lid 2500ml for Pickling Kimchi Sauerkraut Honey...

Ceramic Fermentation Crock Pickling Pot: Traditional Chinese Ceramic Fermenting Jar Stoneware Ceramic Fermenter for Healthy Kimchi...

Wuhuyuan 0.67/1.3/2 Gallon Large Traditional Glass Fermenting Jar with Water Seal Airlock Lid, Kimchi, Pickles or Any Fermente...

CODOH Pickle Jar, Jingdezhen Double-Covered Ceramic Jar, Pickled Sauerkraut Drowned Kimchi and Pickled Egg Jar, Household Pickled...

Kerazo 7 L (1.9 Gall) K&K Keramik German Made Fermenting Crock Pot

Jilimo Easy Grip Fermentation Weight- 4 Pack of Glass Weights for Wide Mouth Mason Jars

RESEARCH

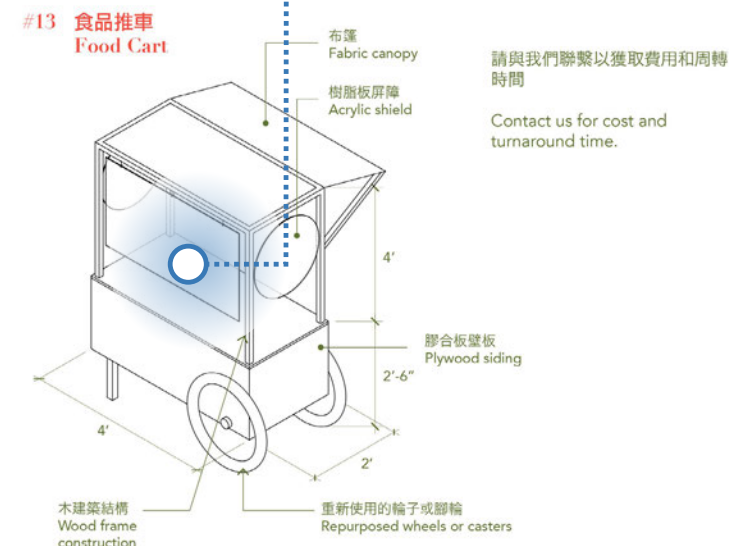
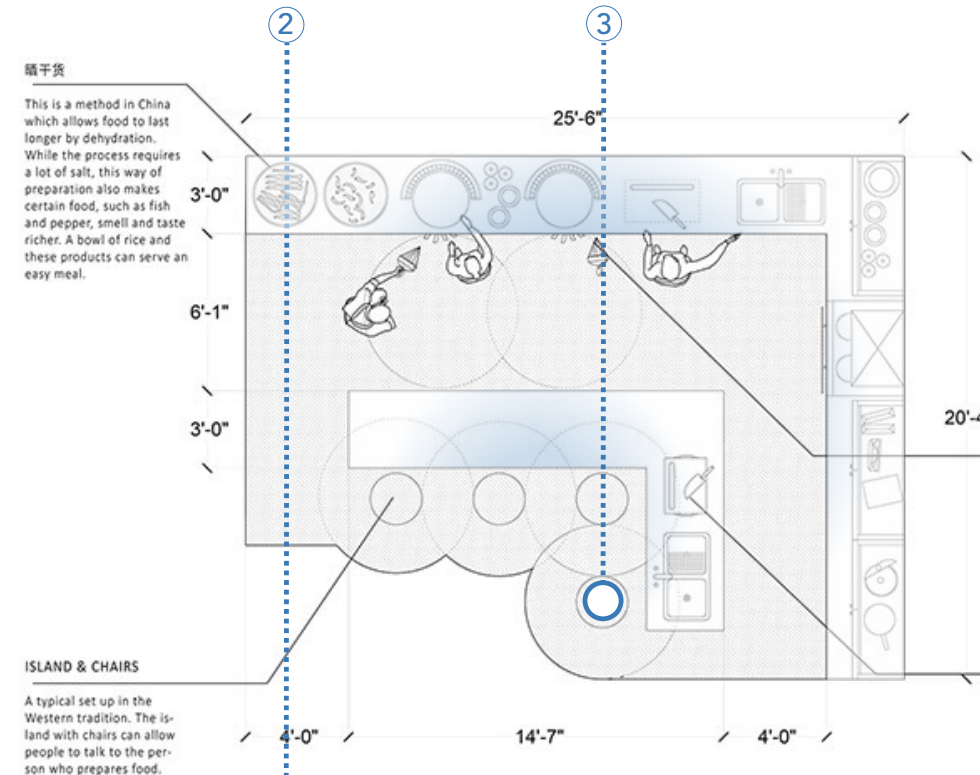
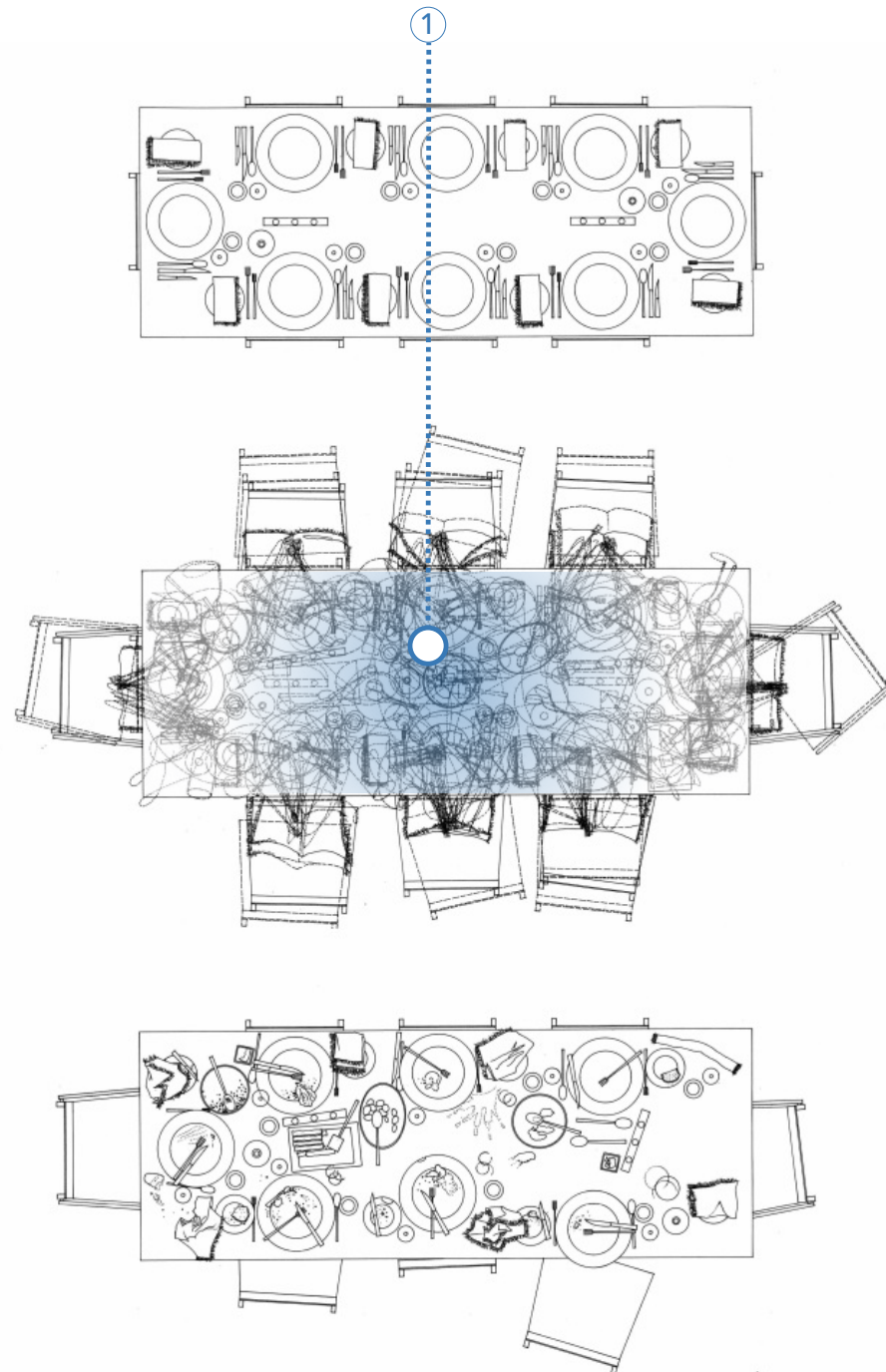
Mobile Cart



- 1. The Frankfurt Kitchen** (Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky for Ernst May, 1926)
 - + one of the first kitchens that prefers efficiency and low cost within the domestic sphere
 - lacks communal aspect within kitchen through less space, makes cooking (as a process) an individual process
- 2. Roaming Market** (Abbarent Architecture, 2013)
 - + mobile performance venues based on 16th century market stalls, emphasizing a return to the local market within a modern society
 - less space within smaller unit to possible fit a kitchen / cooking unit despite mobility
- 3. Beyond Borders** (Merrett Houmoller Architects, 2017)
 - + a mobile base for the Refugees and Befriending Project that serves as a kitchen and dining space for refugees in Britain
 - emphasis at aiming for different people without identity / cultural ties
- 4. White Limousine Yatai** (Atelier Bow Wow, 2002)
 - + re-imagining of the typical "yatai" (street - side food cart) as a communal effort - mobile and ten meters long to ensure a "banquet" experience within a small town setting
 - difficult to store and to move long distances, needs to be slightly smaller in scale in order to be truly "mobile"

RESEARCH

Representation



1. Increasing Disorder in a Dining Table (Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till, 2002)

+ documenting movement through dining table
- lacks step by step documentation of people's actions and manners at the table

2. Chinese Communal Graphic Standards (Raven Xu, 2018)

+ documentation of Chinese domestic spaces (like the lazy susan, the set up of hot pot, etc.)
- explanation is through description, not visually

3. Assembly for Chinatown (A+A+A, 2020)

+ proposals for NYC Chinatown's to venture from the restaurant standard during height of COVID, documentation of mobile / street fixtures
- lacks future possibilities of interactions

PRECEDENT

Cart



1. "Tower Furniture for the House with the Little Chinese Girl, Mario Tchou Residence, Milan" by Ettore Sottsass (1960 - 1963)

2. "Spazio Vivo (Living Space) Mobile Kitchen Unit" by Virgilio Forchiassin (1968)

3. "Untitled (One Hundred Spaces)" by Rachel Whiteread (1995)

4. Eat Food by LAMAS (2016)

5. Walking Assembly by Matter Design (2019)

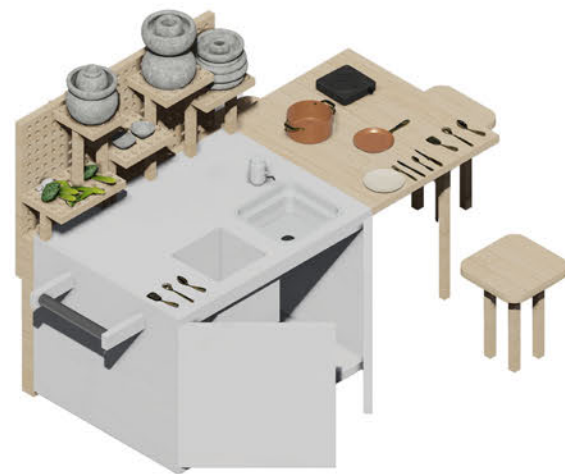
6. Fantastic Atlas by Onomiau / Noel Picaper (2021)



We tend to focus on the movement, like Walking Assembly's rocking motion, materiality, like Rachel Whiteread's massive pure forms in resin, or profile in shape like, LAMAS' cart proposal.

WORK IN PROCESS

Cart Iterations



We initially started more normative in the pragmatic design of the cart, but then experimented with the size and shape of the cart - almost treating it like a vessel itself.

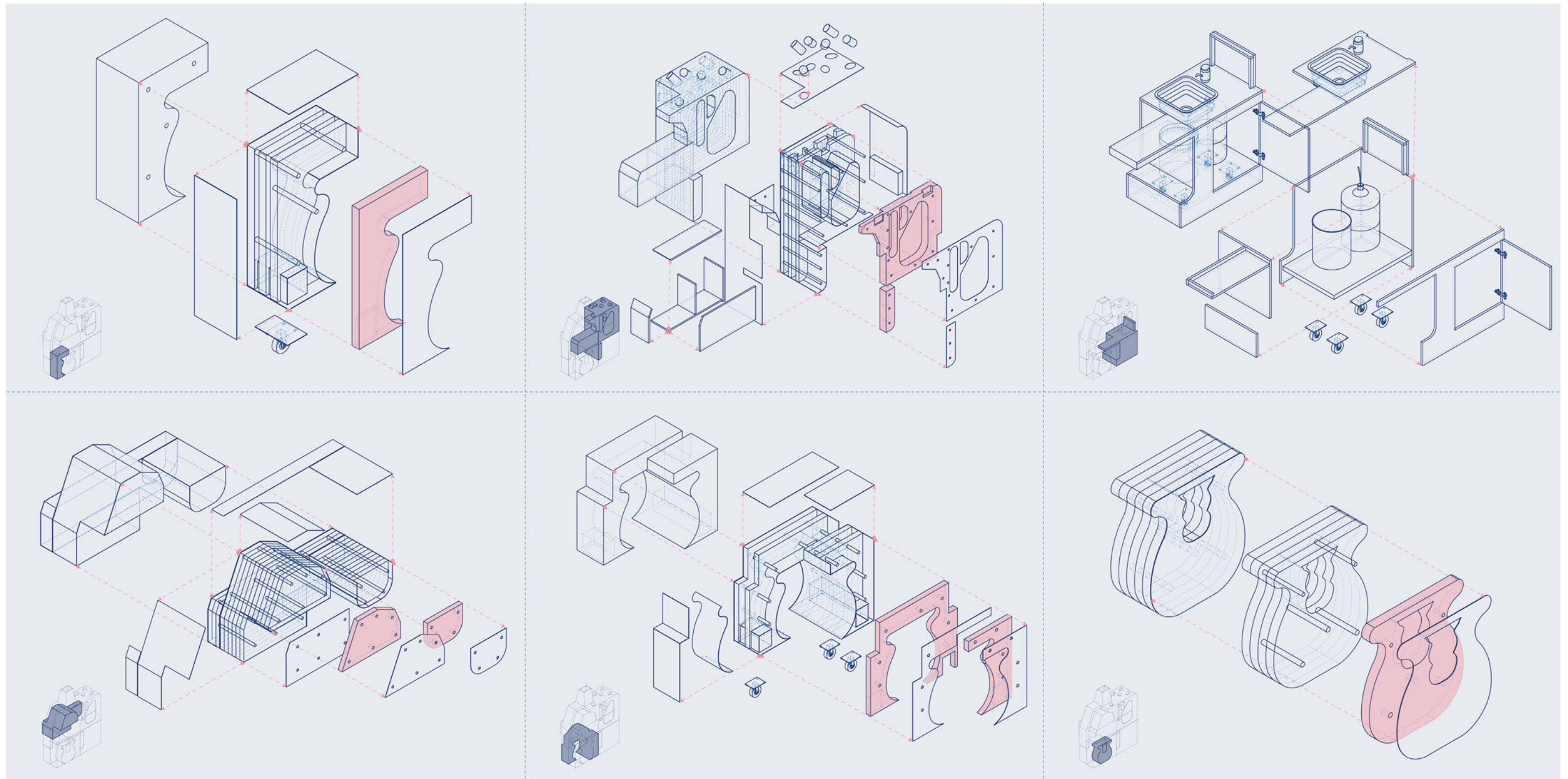
WORK IN PROCESS

Jar



CONSTRUCTION

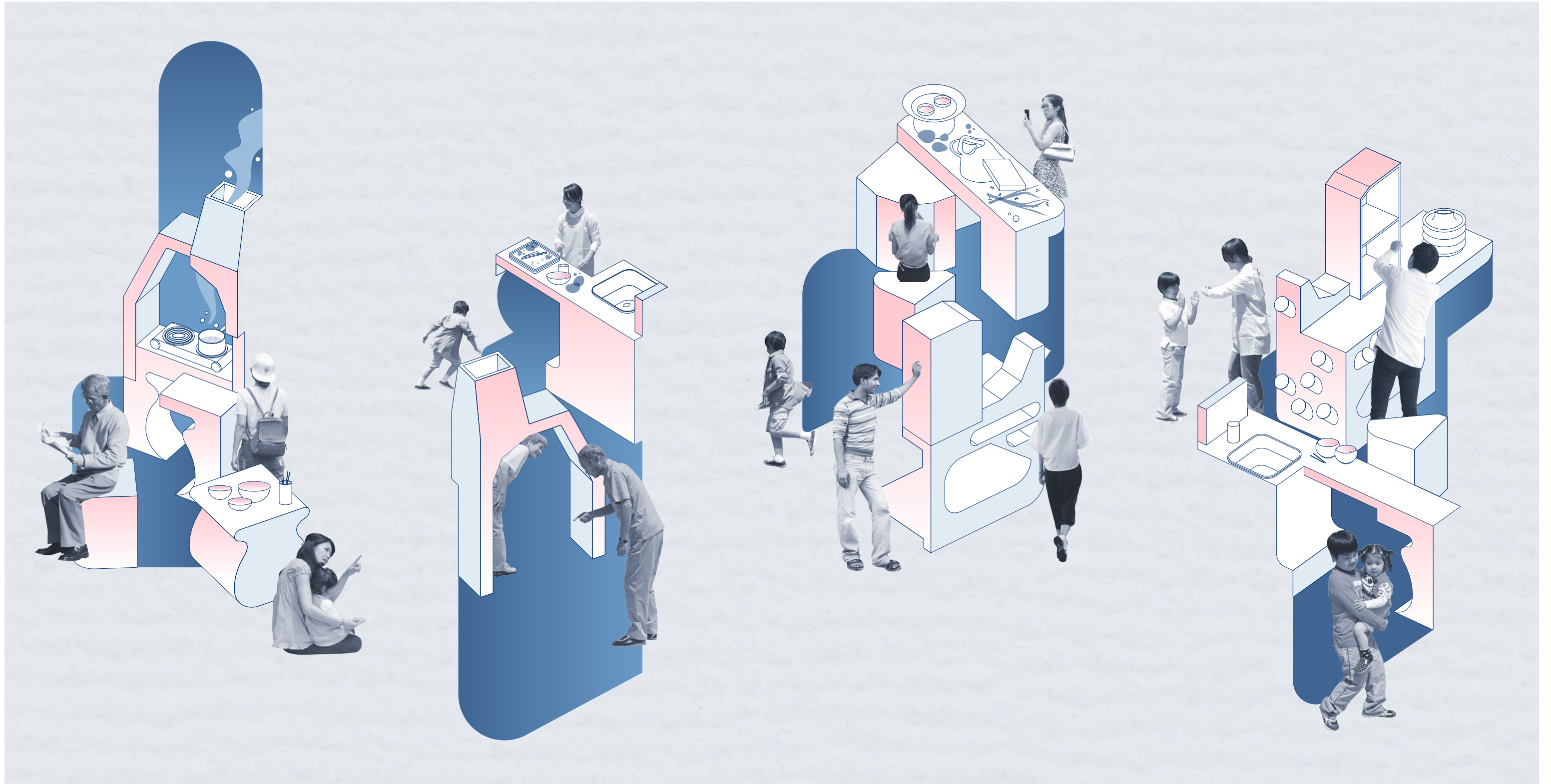
Cart Construction Axons



We used thin wood / MDF boards as surfaces with CNC-ed foam sheets and wood dowels as structural supports. The foam sheets are layered with wood dowels aligning them to enhance the strength. The interior structure is covered by the MDF boards, then being primed and painted for water resistance to ensure sturdiness against wear and tear.

ASSEMBLY

Cart Interaction



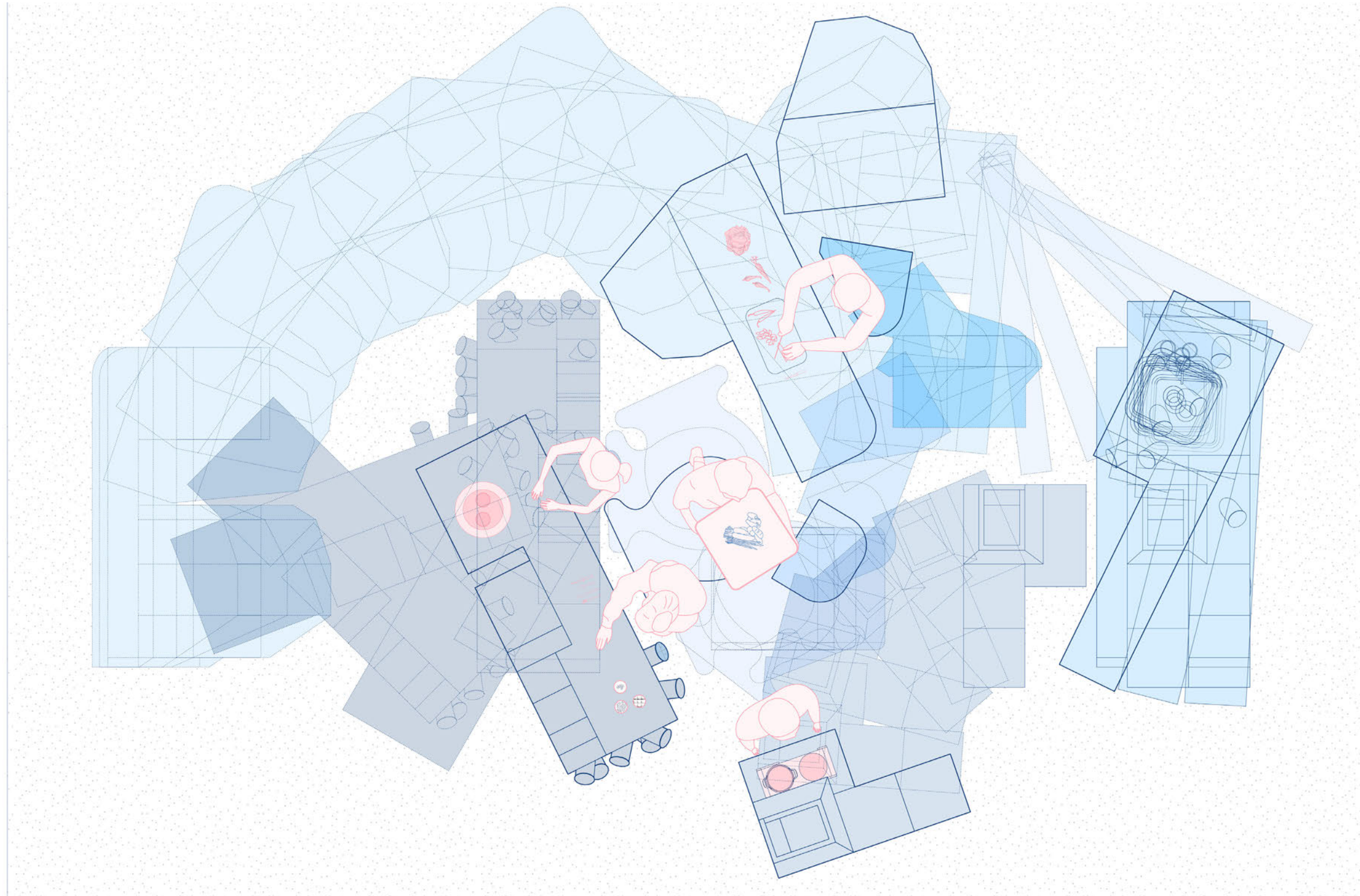
ASSEMBLY

Cart & Pickling Session



Altogether, the cart posed as a monolithic vessel for the domestic environment that garnered much attention. Our design proposal focused on creating individual parts that could be taken apart with the help of two people - revealing programmatic units of the kitchen. The design encourages community spectacle and interaction in its performance - being disassembled and arranged within a large area. We ended up inviting more stragglers from the picnic that was long over, and through inviting them we were able to explain our design and the pickling process to them. Along the way, they were interested in the protruding spice jars (filled with ingredients) and all of the functions of the cart pieces and took joy in participating within the process of pickling along the way.

MOVEMENT



This drawing showcases the intended dismantling and move ability of the cart to reposition components to desired organizations. It shows a possible dismantling motion of the cart and how the different parts are pulled apart from an order, rotated, and shifted. These spaces are then utilized for different pickling tasks and intersection of social interactions.

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