

Portfolio

Project 02

Kangzhi Men

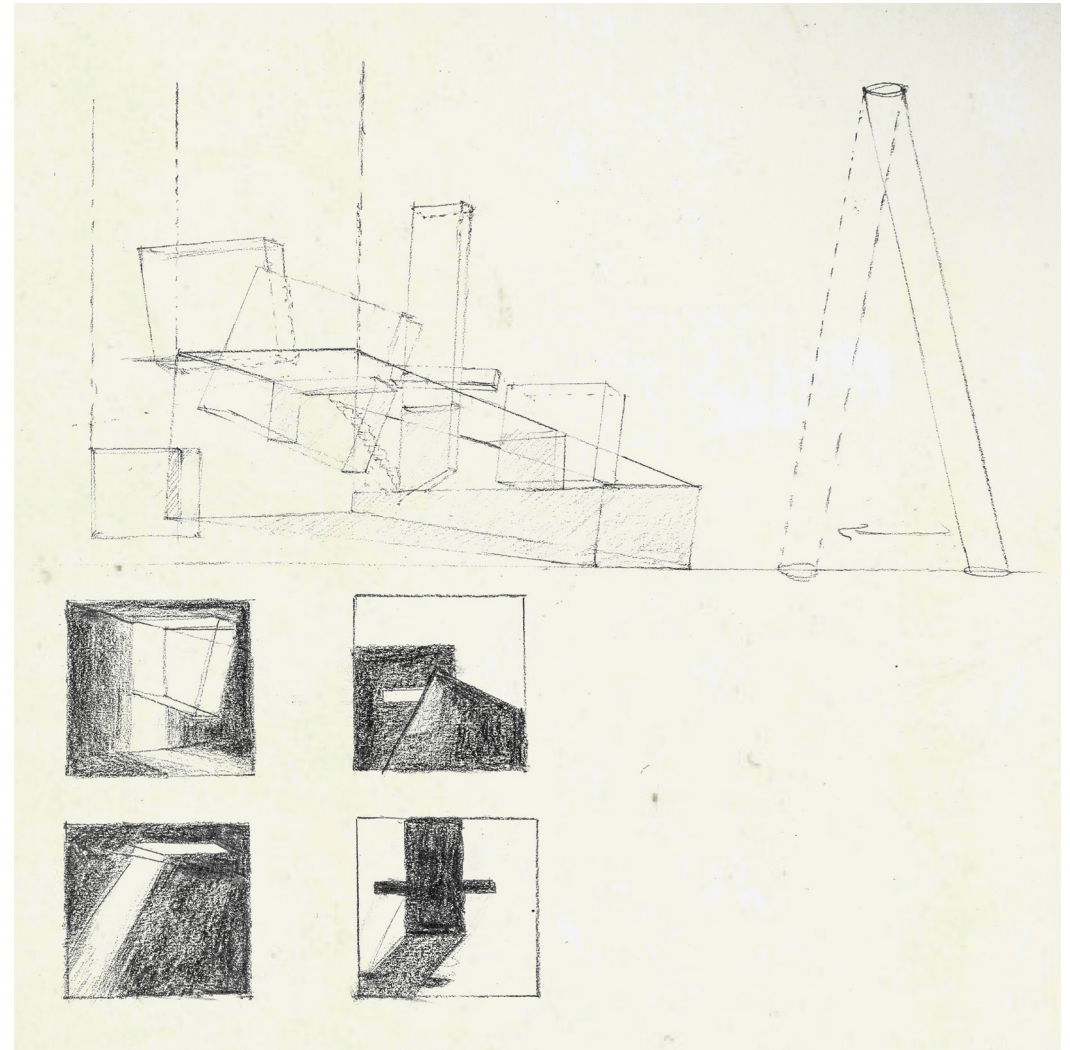
2021

LOCKDOWN

Light as a Material

LOCKDOWN is the stage set I designed according to the short story written by Eileen Chang, *Sealed Off*. It was chosen based on my admiration to Chang, her literature and thoughts, and my own experience linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature of Chang threw great insight towards the mindset of ordinary Chinese people during the Republican period. Also, at the summer that I had this design, I experienced an 8-hour lockdown in a lounge of an airport

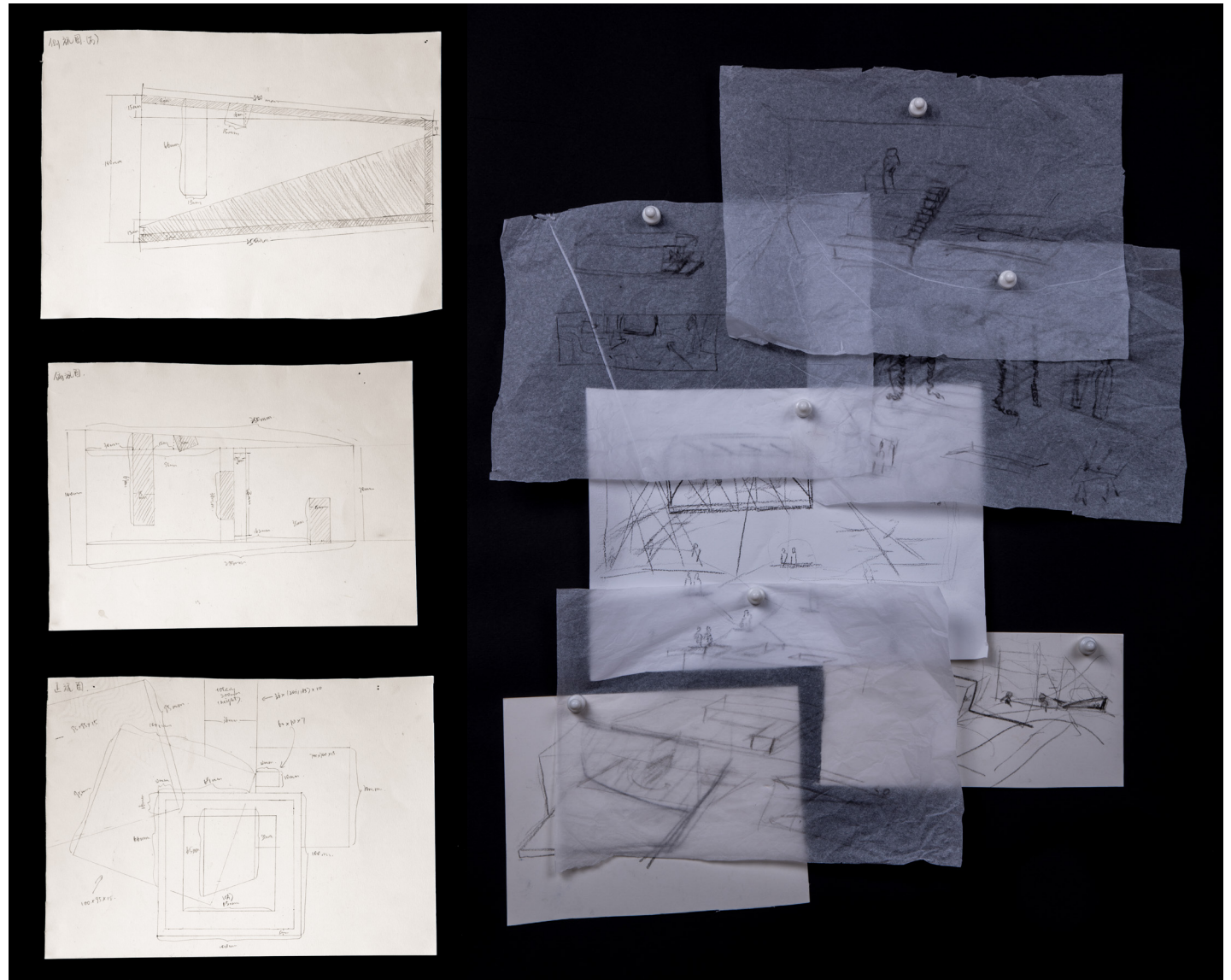
in Beijing, in which I came to recognize the unique dynamics and interaction between people under this special circumstance. This gave me an extra insight towards the short story. The materials chosen, the shape of the set, and the space created altogether reflect my interpretation of the characters' relationship, context and atmosphere of the story, and the text's symbolic meanings.

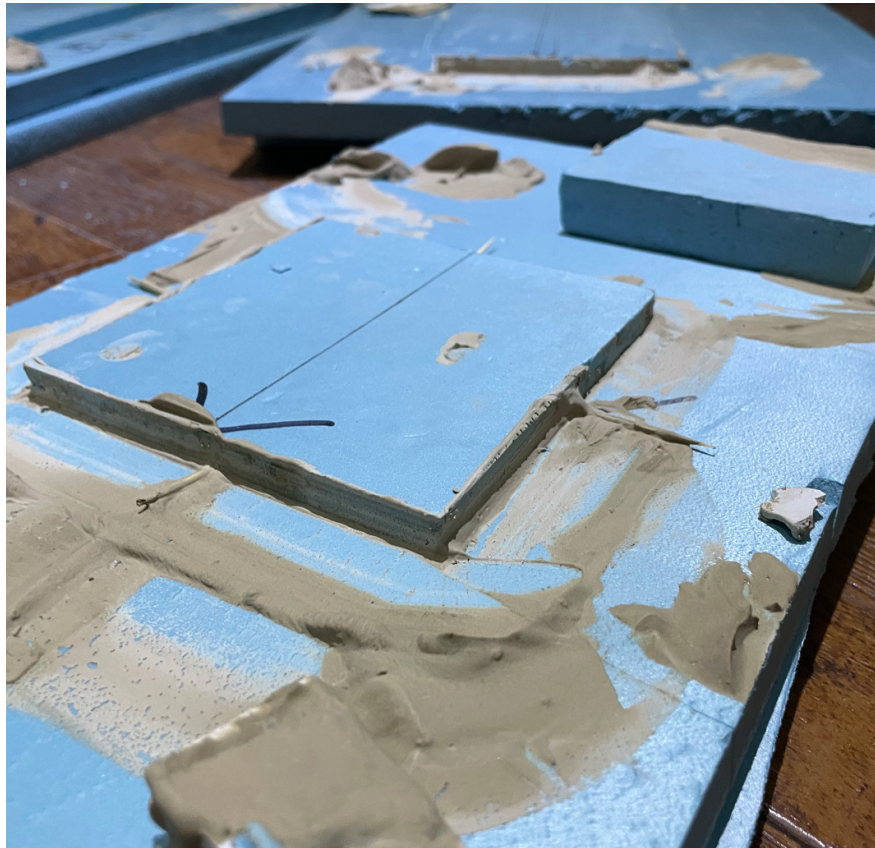


Symbols & Design

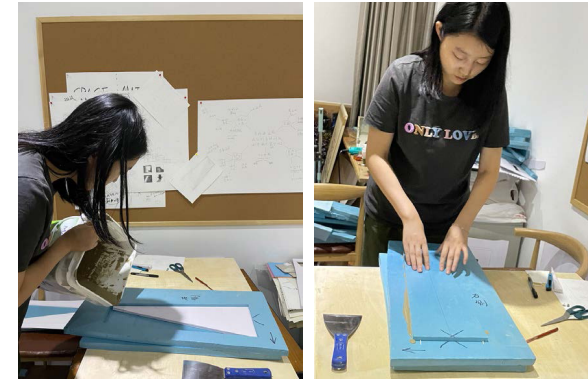
Considering the context of the story, which is in the edge of war, I wanted the overall tone to be cold, and that was the reason of using concrete as the material of the main body. However, since the story itself is about flirting, loneliness and the relationship between men and women in a chaotic era, I also wanted the atmosphere to be mysterious, ambiguous and humid, which was achieved by relatively warm lighting. These two elements seem to contradict with each other but actually both contribute to a feeling of suffocation.

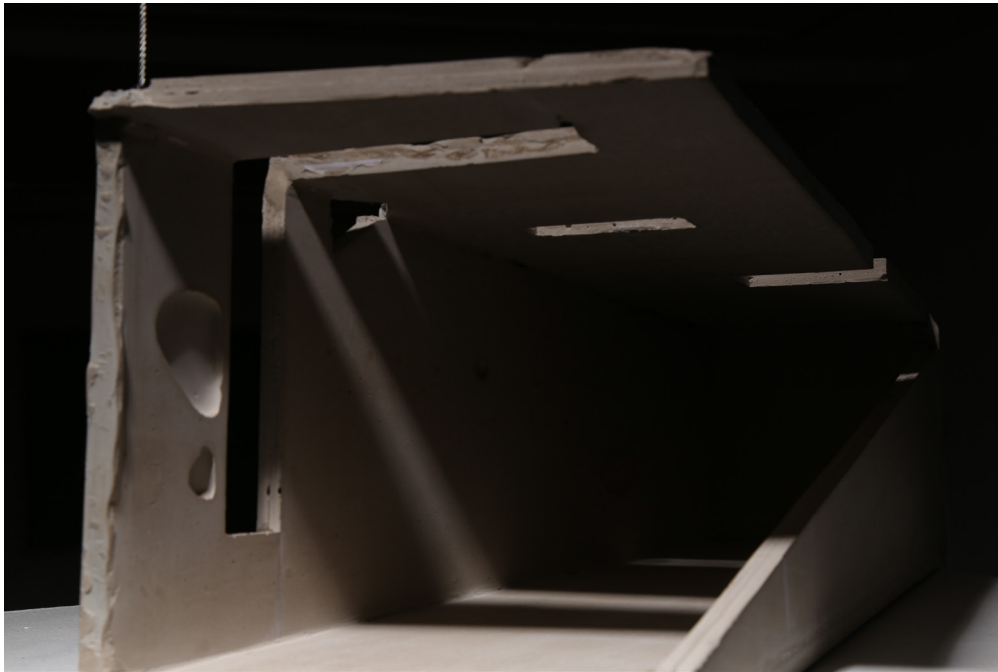
My first draft is a closed box with all elements attached inside. However, reconsidering the topic that I wanted to emphasize in the text, I restructured my reflection and the symbols that I wanted to use and hence decided to drag those elements out, such as the blocks. In this way, different kinds of space and different levels for performance are also created. After two sketches of design and one mind map listing and demonstrating all my interpretations and corresponding ways to symbolize the atmosphere and meanings, I finalized my design and started building the model using concrete.





The model was built by moulding each face separately and sticking them back together. It was a time-consuming process requiring full attention.



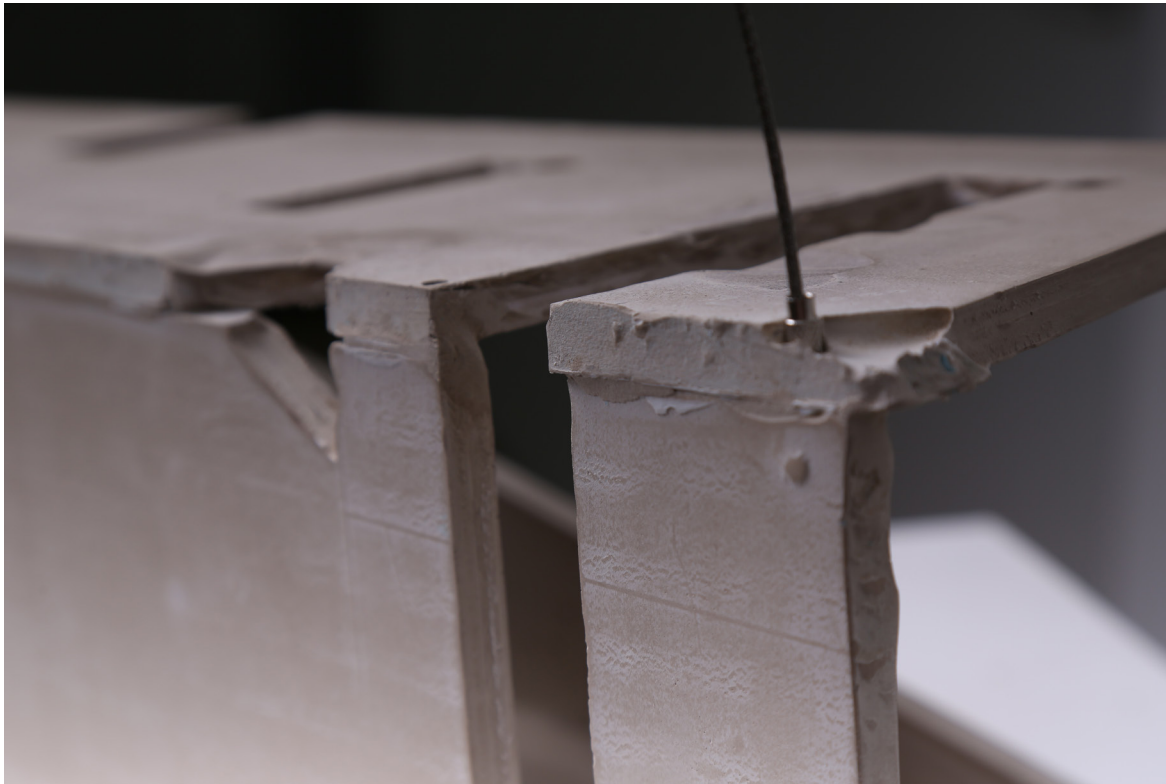


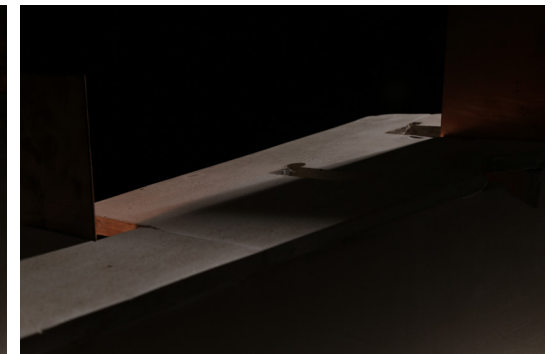
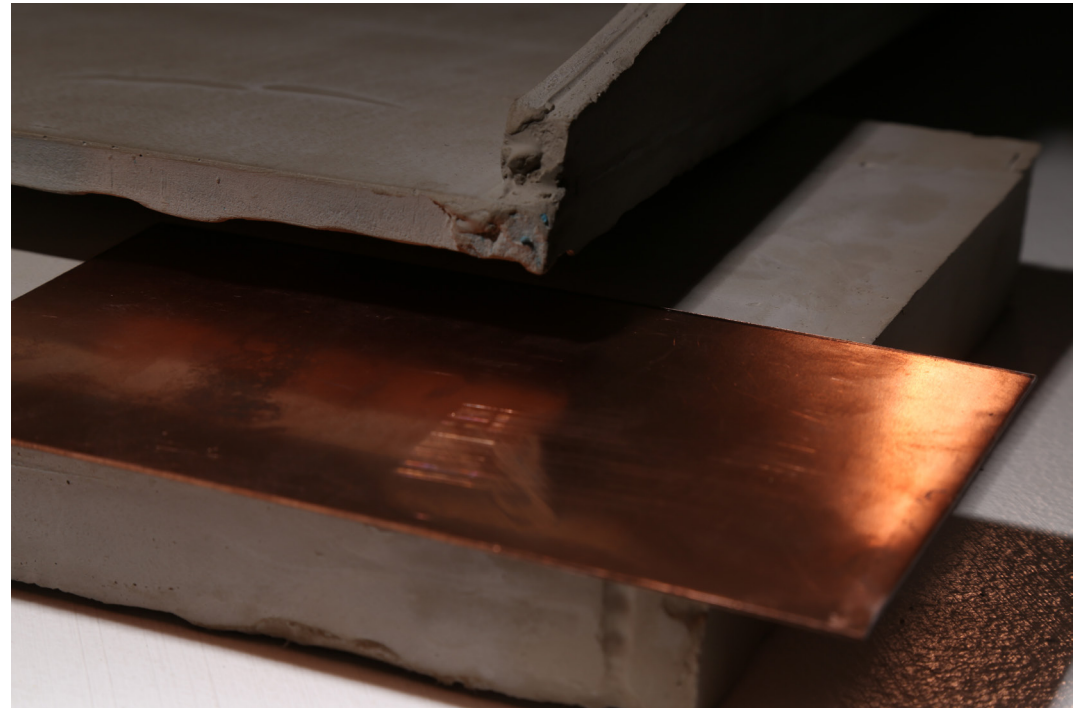
The interaction between characters is interesting, which happens when characters are forced to communicate with each other in a closed space in the story. Given this situation, characters seemed to be displayed in front of each other with only one facet of themselves shown instead of a whole person. They choose to display that specific facet, hiding other parts. They might be kind people but not

necessarily real people and true selves, and they will never get to know the parts that they have not seen.

Therefore, in the sealed-off tram, space and time are an insertion to the real world, which will vanish as the lockdown is lifted, and what has happened during the lockdown will vanish along with it, including any new-established relationships. After

all, the concepts of illusion, reality and super-reality are constantly reflected in the text. Thus, in regard to this interpretation, I thought of mirror, overlapping, blocking, seen-and-unseen, the work of Rene Magritte, and used a lot of blocking of view and boards made of copper alloy to reflect and diffuse the light as a type of material.





The intersection between real and unreal is symbolized by the half-closed space like main body and the light and shadow on and around it. Also, the main body is positioned in an overbalanced angle, like a snapshot, signifying the transience of events in the play.

