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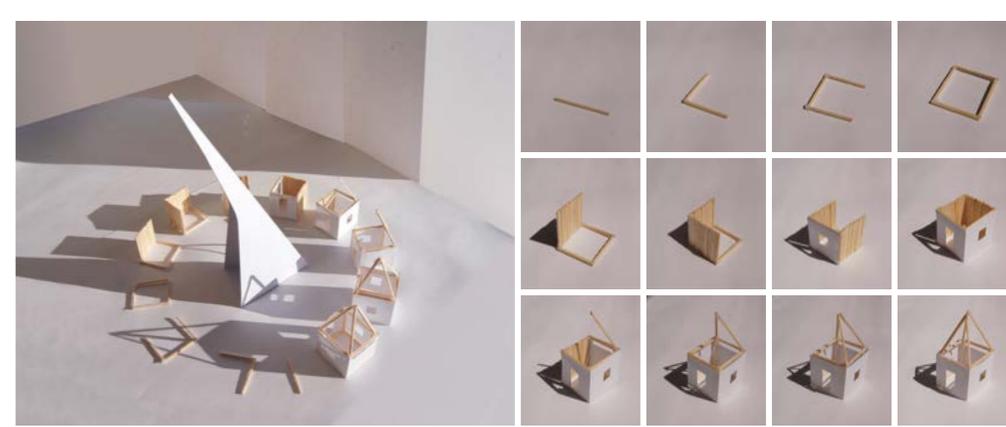
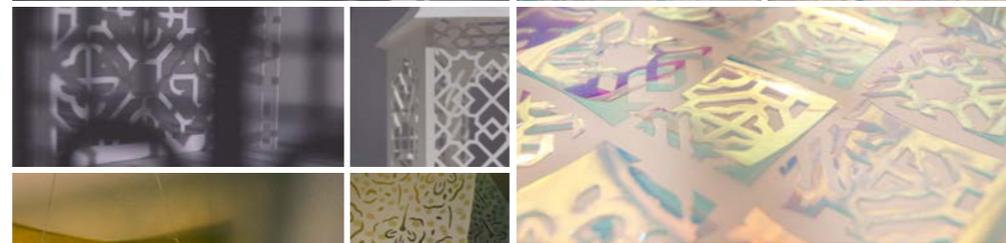
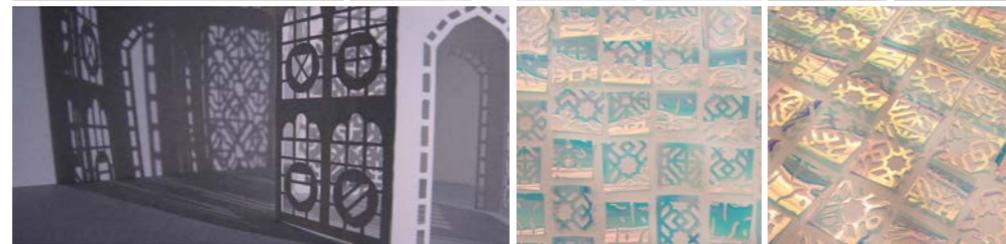
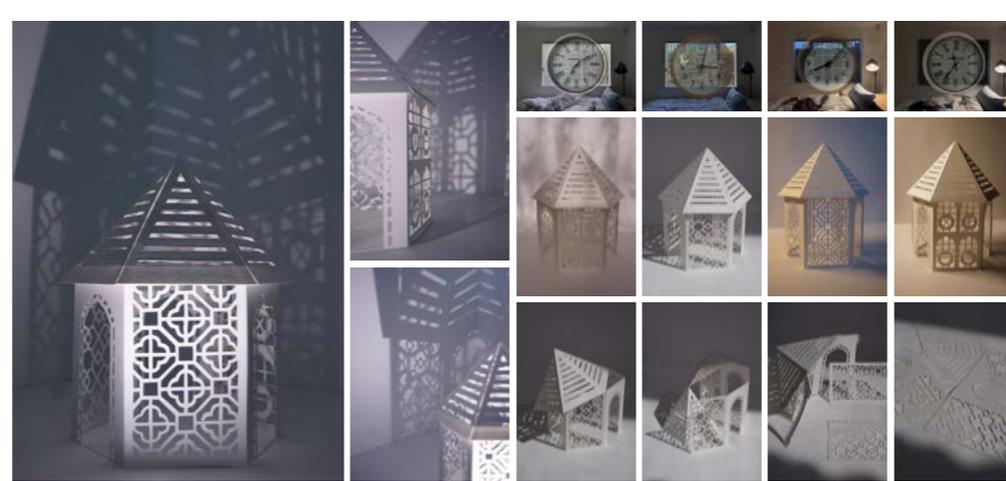
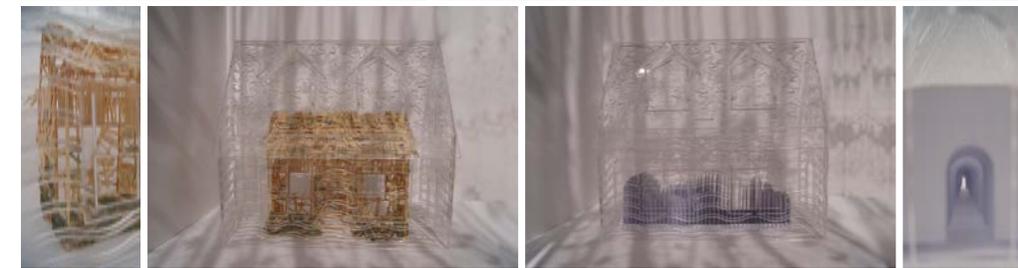
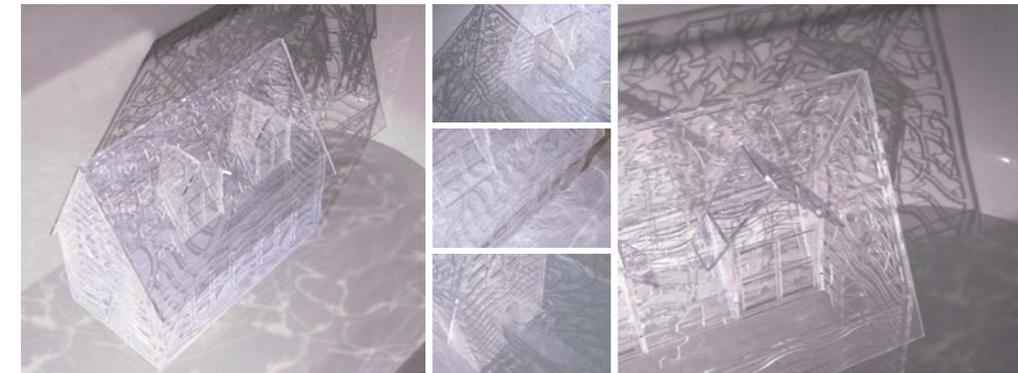
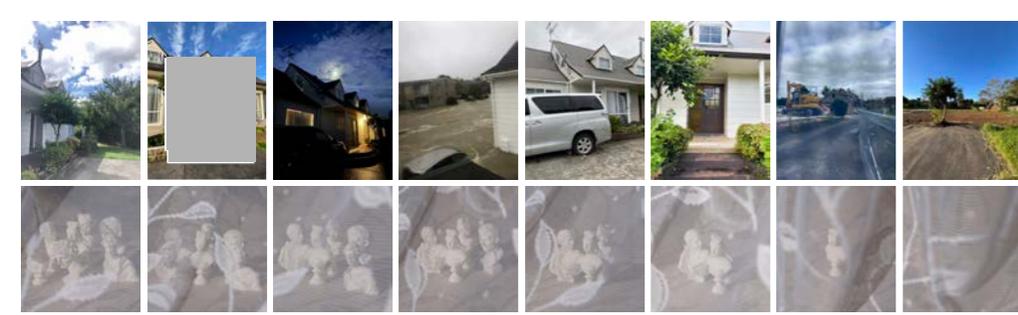


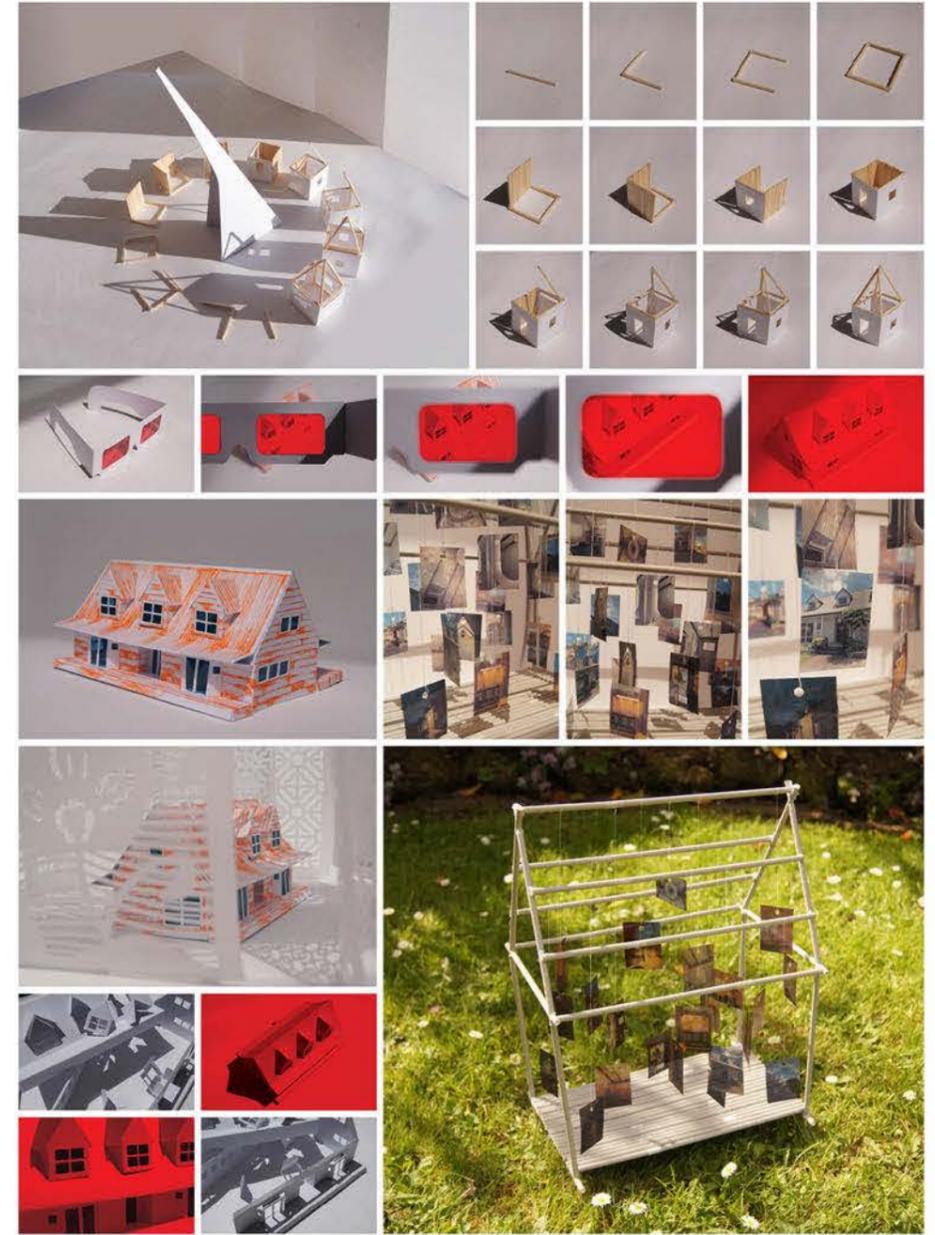
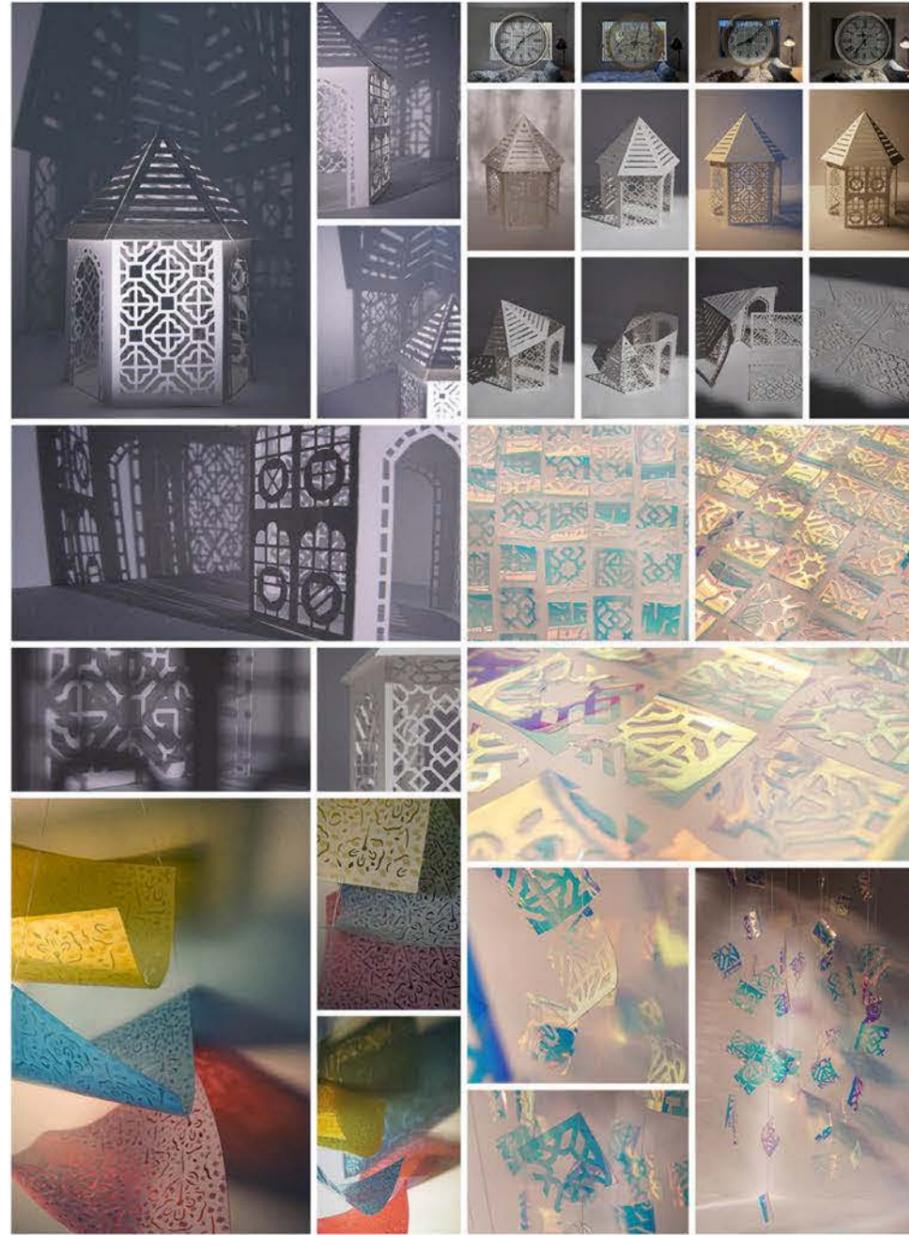
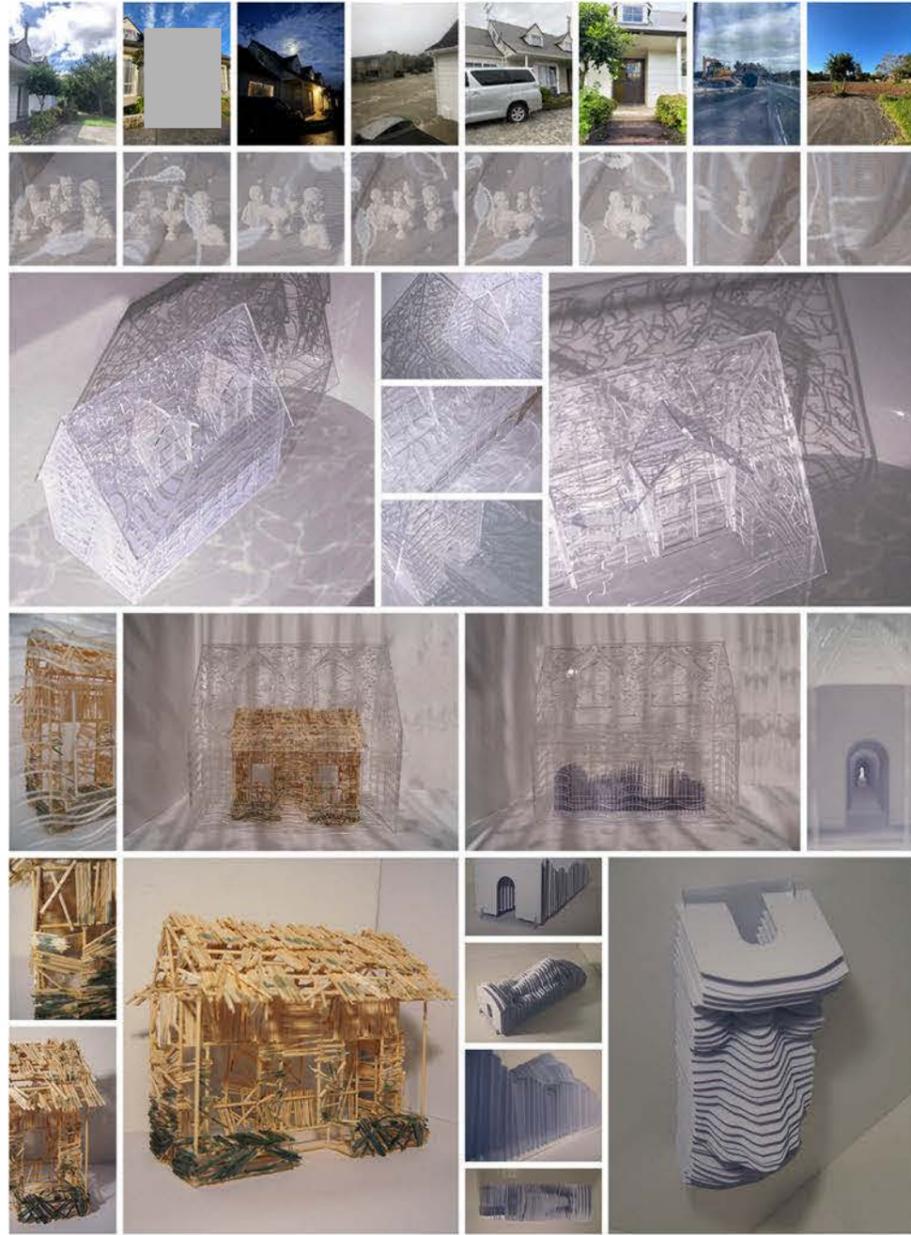
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship Visual Arts 2025

93308 Sculpture

TOP SCHOLAR





Proposal

This year, my work will explore the hidden or overlooked emotional connection we develop with our home (a building or a place) and the memories and security it provides us with. This includes the sudden realisation of its value to us once we lose it or are forcibly removed from it which is a deeply personal experience to me as I lost my home to the flooding caused by Cyclone Gabrielle. In my work I will explore this emotional connection through architectural influences, lighting, geometry, perspective, scale, and the perception of time.

I would say that the flooding of my home was, and still remains, one of the most impactful events in my (pretty short) life. Not only was it a disaster which plunged my family into a period of instability, but on the flip side, I found that I also took away many valuable life lessons from it. Art is a medium through which we can try to convey experiences and messages to other people who may not have gone through the same things as us. More importantly though, it conveys feelings and creates atmospheres that are hard to grasp with words, much in the way that I could not clearly approach the loss I was struggling with which was manifested through a tangle of emotions or physical discomfort.



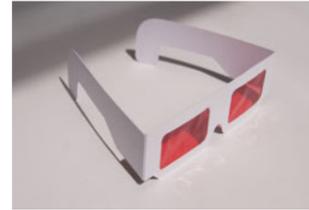
my former house, now demolished.

This sudden loss of a space I had taken for granted for the past 15 years taught me to notice the beauty in my life while it lasts and showed me how much of an integral part of my life this house had been. It began in a state of confusion, I hadn't lost any of my loved ones and they were all safe and sound, yet I felt like a part of me was missing. I believed that it had just been the shock of having a natural disaster occur so close to home, but as time progressed, it became clear that it wasn't only that. It led to me grasping at the idea that my house had a 'soul', that buildings and objects also had 'souls', otherwise why would its loss hurt so much?

Key Ideas

Perception

This was the main idea that I wanted to deal with in my board. We have the control to perceive events how we want to, but it can often be hard to get to a point where our perception/ focus is on the right thing (usually the positives) and to shift from fixating on negative thoughts.



Time

Time is an integral part of the human experience and is one of the main driving forces in our life that we have absolutely no control over. It makes us want to slow it down when life is going well, and can seem frustratingly difficult to pass when we are not in the best chapter of our lives. I wanted to incorporate the notion of time into my sculptures as I believe that it was one of the constants in my processing of loss; no matter what, time will always keep flowing.



Lighting

In the same way that we can view things from the perspective we want, I believed that lighting would be able to elevate my sculptures to the next level and produce effects beyond shape and form. For example, I liked to play with the shadows cast by my sculptures and make them an integral part of the

I liked that sculpture was a medium which gave me the ability to make things 'real'; instead of staring at an image on a flat surface, I could make something that was 3D and something that I could touch. As a way of processing my loss, I realised that sculpture took that beyond looking at photos on my phone or replaying memories in my mind; it was something real and tangible and I liked that I could express my thoughts in this way.

final result, as well as using transparent colours to layer and combine or to create new visual effects.

Architecture



I have always had a fascination with the built environment and structural elements around me so I wanted to extend my love for architecture into my

work. I found that this worked well as I had to deal with many structural calculations when measuring and creating my pieces, especially when working with machines like the laser cutter. Surprisingly, it gave me experience into making models in the real world and working with maths like vector projections which are important in modelling software which architects use.

Geometry

As an artist who has always seen the relationship between visual arts and mathematics (probably owing to my love of architecture) I find a lot of beauty in the geometry of the built environment and wanted to include that in my board as well. This manifested in the construction of the many 'buildings' in my board but also in the patterns that I used, which I had to carefully calculate and position before cutting.



I hope to pay tribute to my former home through my board, but moreover, I would like it to be something through which people can grasp at the idea of loss, and also to find the beauty in a situation no matter how dire it could be. I would like those who see my work to take away the lessons of never taking your home for granted and noticing the joy and security it gives you; noticing your connection with it.

Overview

Board I - Loss and destruction

The opening photographic responses show the process of losing my home to the floods, paired with depopulating busts shielded from the camera by a layer of sheer lace curtains. This represents the event that triggered my inspiration to create this board as well as the idea that many people (more than we may have expected) went through gruelling private struggles during this time, struggles that were more than just from losing physical things.



Initially, I wanted to focus on my memories and create physical forms for them as that was the first phase of processing my loss. However, I quickly realised that organising my board in a chronological order would make much more sense, where processing my memories came after the loss of my home – this led to me having to rearrange the order of my sculptures between boards I and II.

I wanted to grasp at the effect of the destruction of my home, the 'unrealness' of it all and the sense that it was fading from my memories. Seeing spaces that we treasured, that gave us comfort or spaces that we found to be very beautiful or spiritually significant be destroyed can have a major emotional impact and I wanted to emanate this loss of being forcibly removed from them in my sculptures. They convey this idea of loss and destruction not only in a literal sense, but also in a figurative way through my choices of material, shape and form. The idea of transparency struck me as the perfect way to reminisce on loss. Clear acrylic is solid and real when you touch it, but when you see it, it seems as if it may not really be there. This duality struck me as being similar to the confusion in my mind as to whether my house still existed or not; would it ever be the same again?

Board II - Memory

Next, I directly explored our emotional connection with spaces, dealing with the fragmented nature of my memories of my home. The different patterns used, both geometric and organic, capture the essence of my memories from a variety of important spaces, with Chinese cultural patterns owing to my heritage, floral patterns mirroring the lace curtains I had at home, Islamic zellige patterns attributed to my love of mathematics and also cut outs inspired by the stained glass windows I saw in the UK and in places of worship. I also further confronted the passage of time and the erosion of memories through trying to create a dreamlike atmosphere via my choice of materials and lighting.



Board III - Reconstruction

My final board brought me to the last stage of processing the loss of my home: reconstruction from memory. I realised that all the memories I made in that house are a gift that I will forever take with me and that I can choose to continue to remember. After taking the time to process the destruction and all the memories, I was finally able to reconfront the fragments of what was left and to make something of it. I deal with the ideas that 'time heals wounds', that we can choose to view things through 'rose-coloured lenses' and that we can confront and remember past grievances without having to suffer.



Timeline of Events

Mid 2009

I was not yet two years old and me and my parents moved into this house which we would call home for the next 15 years. It was situated at the end of a long driveway (with 3 other houses ahead) and on the border of the [redacted], with a creaky gate opening down to the stream.

28th January 2023

The sun was shining as if nothing had happened, but the driveway was littered with mud, shredded magazines and household paper products, plastic debris and children's toys. The fences were gone, the curtains sagged and the carpet was mushy. We found out that the flooding had reached a height of roughly 1-1.2m indoors and around 1.5-1.7m outdoors, causing significant structural damage to our house and contents.

7th March 2023

After weeks of looking for a rental home, we moved into a temporary place to give my grandma some space. Our old house was getting fixed by the insurance company.

Early 2023

We spent the next month or so at my grandma's house, where I slept in the living room with my brother and did not have any private space. The start of the school term was also postponed. During this time, I had to help with my parents' insurance claims and it was very stressful for the whole family to get back on our feet.

27th January 2023

During the day, it had been raining constantly, and we were aware that the water level in the culvert could rise to dangerously high levels during periods of intense rainfall. However, in the afternoon, I started becoming nervous that it would overflow (which had fortunately never happened at that point) and a gut feeling told me that we should escape to high ground just to be safe. I am so glad that I went and packed my bags because before we knew it, the water level had submerged our driveway, and I was able to escape with my brother and our homestay by car at around 4pm. By this time, the water level had reached the front door and my mother was unable to escape, remaining trapped inside the house until around midnight. When the flooding began to recede, she was able to be rescued from the kitchen backdoor and out through the neighbour's driveway.

29th September 2023

After months of work, we were finally able to move back into my former house. However, the paint colours had changed and the lighting was different... I wondered if it still felt like home.

June 2024

Negotiations for the council buyout of properties in the neighbourhood began, which included our house. Initially, our house was treated as a moderate risk property, so the council had not considered buying it back. However, due to it being situated at the end of the driveway, in the event of another flash flood, it would be difficult to evacuate, raising the risk level to red.

29th September 2024

After our final year living there, we permanently moved out of our home. It felt like losing it all over again.

It sat empty for quite a few months after that. I returned to visit it a few times and the grass was now overgrown and dust littered the kitchen. It was a weird sight to see.

Past

The day of the flooding is still etched in my memories. I think the biggest thing when I look back is that I didn't realise how quickly I would lose something that I had taken for granted all those years.

Present

May 2025

The demolition of houses on our driveway began. Sometimes I would walk past on my way home and see an excavator or just the bare skeleton of what was left standing there.

July 2025

The demolition of 6 houses on our driveway and the neighbouring driveway was completed. There was now a vast expanse of dirt and gravel where we used to live.

Future

The plans for all the land that now sits unoccupied are unknown, but we speculate that it may be turned into a park or a space that can strategically store water, preventing future flooding and damage to the neighbourhood.

Artist Models



This is Not a Refuge

<https://www.anilaagha.com/>

Anila Quayyam Agha

My work is deeply inspired by established artist Anila Quayyam Agha who creates metal structures with intricate cut-out shapes which cast beautiful shadows. I like her work because of its essence: the use of light, pattern, shadows and space, all of which are key concepts that I have been trying to incorporate into my entire portfolio.

“The shadows cast in all directions by the light spilling through the sculpture’s cutout surfaces work magically, creating a dynamic transformation in the space in tandem with the itinerant movement of the audience.”

The main influence that Agha provides for me is her sculptural approach and philosophy: using a heftier material like metal but then juxtaposing that with intricate patterns cut into the metal. By using a similar approach where I cut out patterns from the acrylic and then assemble the separate pieces into a cohesive form, I will also be able to create a juxtaposition between the form of the house and its intricacy. Imitating the sense of negative and positive space that Agha’s sculptures create, I would like to express how my home feels intangible now that it has been destroyed.

Spencer Finch

Artist Spencer Finch also inspired me with his installations of suspended glass panes, which create beautiful layered light effects. The repetition, larger scale, and the refractive properties of the materials are what draws me to his work. Finch’s essence: overlaying transparent materials, repetition with variation, interaction with light and playing with colour, can all help me convey a visual message about loss. His work evokes a dream-like feel, which I can translate into the emotion of disbelief, reflecting the time it takes to process loss or shock.



Following Nature

<https://www.spencerfinch.com/>

I like that Finch’s installations are made from glass which can represent fragility, tying in with my idea of destruction. However, the way in which the material interacts with light also evokes a sense of nostalgia or being mentally lost and suspended in time. Furthermore, the large panels and use of planes also give his work an expansive feeling, as if the loss could be never-ending. Ideally, my sculptures would take up the space of a gallery room



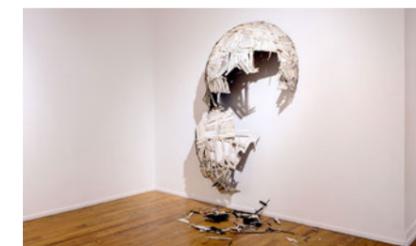
Another Kind of Blue

or foyer, much like Finch’s work does, and extend towards the ground for an immersive experience where viewers can walk through freely. Perhaps even a mirrored room would help create a further sense of expansion and disorientation. However, for feasibility’s sake, I needed to shrink the scale and use a less fragile material.

Seth Clark

I wanted the image of destruction in my work to be inspired by artist Seth Clark who has earned the nickname: ‘destroyer of worlds’. He uses wood and old, broken materials to generate new forms, applying the approach of deconstruction to reconstruction. Clark deliberately destructs or utilises already-broken materials and rearranges them in ways that bring meaning and beauty to decay, evoking a sense of melancholy. He succeeds in finding

<https://www.sethclark.com/sculpture>



order within chaos, destruction and ruin, using mostly natural materials but also with hints of human intervention such as the occasional use of paint.

Here is one of Clark’s comments on his own work: “An interplay between suffering and resilience is found in forgotten places. I strive to capture the essence of neglected structures, exploring our fascination with decay and encouraging viewers to ponder the transient nature of our existence.” – I believe this is a very fitting purpose for my theme. I like the way in which Clark expresses the fragility of existence and to confront viewers with the idea that the things you take for granted can be taken away very quickly. His way of rearranging and reframing decay and destruction is pleasant enough to draw viewers in yet also displays a brutal reality.

Barbara Earl Thomas & Andy Singleton

Other than thematic influences, artists like Barbara Earl Thomas and Andy Singleton inspired me directly in terms of process. Thomas works with a variety of mediums and is not necessarily known as a sculptor. However, I was immediately drawn to her life-sized paper cuts which immerse the viewer. I also appreciated the precision and skill in Singleton's work, being able to produce beautifully hand-cut organic forms.



<https://barbaraearlthomas.com/paper-cuts/>



<http://andysingleton.co.uk/nature-man-machine>

Michelle Lum

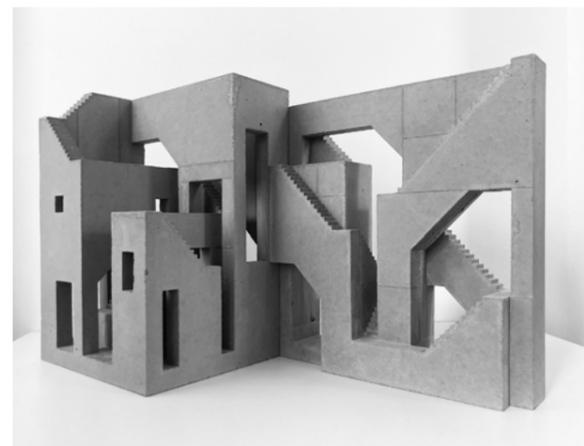
Michelle Lum's use of transparent cellophane really caught my eye as she uses all the advantages of the material to create her sculptures. The effects that her work is able to create inspired me to try similar materials and also to pursue the idea of iridescence in my work.



<https://www.michellelum.com/#/rise/>

David Umemoto

The abstract nature of David Umemoto's work partly inspired my third sculpture. His work encapsulates a dream-like, illusory feel, evoking a sense of unsettling confusion yet at the same time, being fascinating. I wanted to create a similar feeling to that of his with my endless hallway inside the abstract figure of a human head, owing our mental perception of spaces.



davidumemoto.com/closed-circuits/

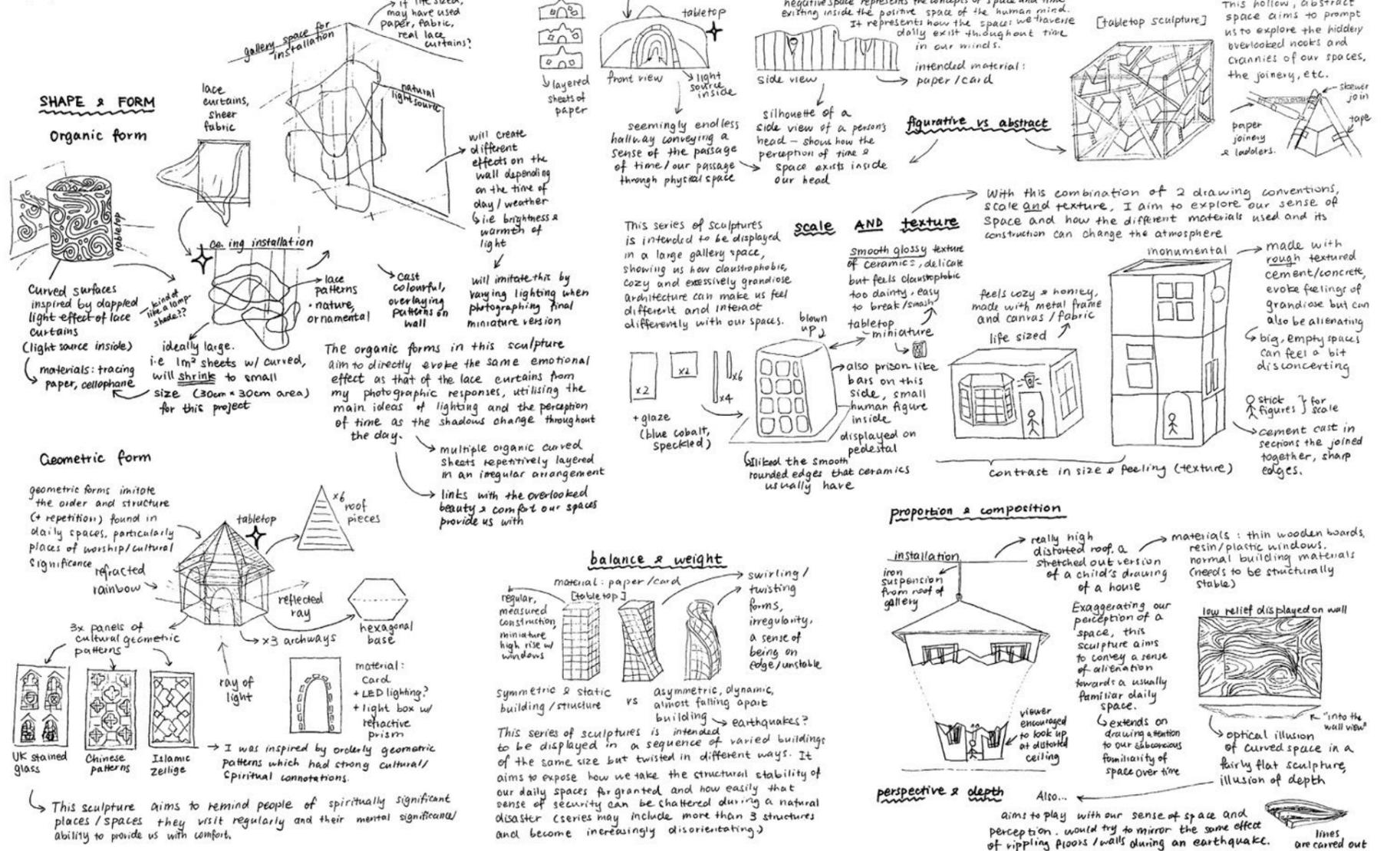
Sculptural Approaches

To explore all the avenues through which I could approach my subject matter from, I brainstormed many times, focusing on specific sculptural approaches or drawing conventions. The main approaches I honed in on after careful consideration include repetition, layering, construction & reduction, installation and interactivity. I am someone who believes that the best way to view art is to interact with it, because

the artist has only half the job; the viewer has the other half – to interpret and to grasp what it means for themselves. I also tried to include changing or kinetic elements such as the sundial and the iridescent fragments, which can be displayed in an outdoor setting. These approaches best tie in with my theme as processing emotions requires repeated revision, layering of memories and working through them interactively.

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

w/ drawing conventions ~
Key: ✦ - selected as a final sculpture



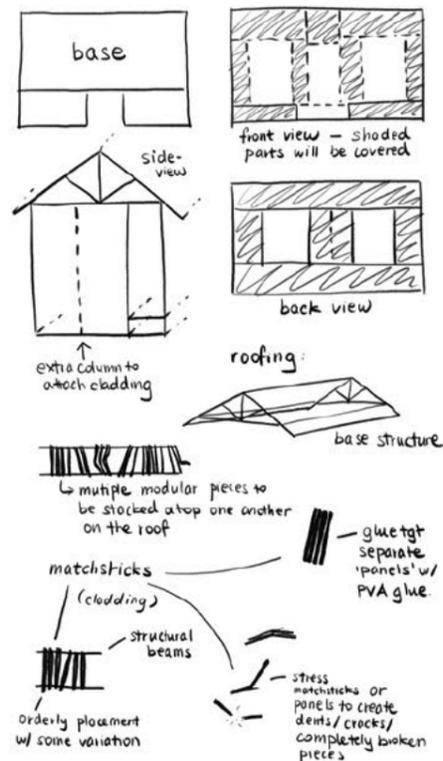
Process and Experimentation + lots of challenges

My overall philosophy for the materials I used were that I wanted them to be easily worked with and transportable. For example, I can store some of the sculptures on boards I and II flat in my file folder. However, other than ease of use, a big aspect of my material choices was the mood or atmosphere they evoked, or the unique sculptural advantages they gave me.

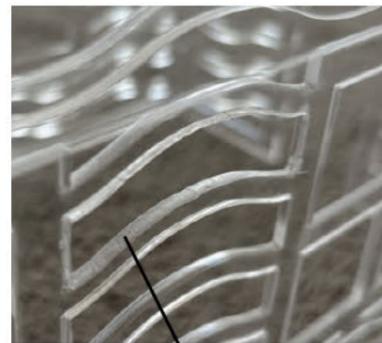
As someone who is interested in architecture and the built environment, I found that I liked to meticulously plan out my sculptures with exact measurements and construct them in my imagination before making them in real life. This meant that most of the 'experimentation' for my sculptures was to do with material constraints and less so in the actual construction of the sculptural forms.

Bamboo matchsticks

I thought this was the perfect material to convey destruction and ruin, especially combined with my inspiration from Seth Clark's work where he uses materials directly from the site of ruin to construct beautiful pieces of art. Bamboo matchsticks were widely available and emanated the feeling of the decaying, splintered wood that would have been found in my house after the flooding. They were also very workable with both PVA and hot glue and I could stain the material with paints to create a moulding effect.



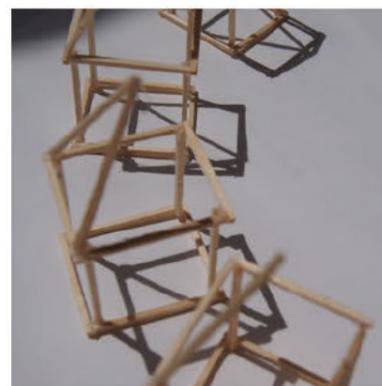
uncut piece that I was unable to pop out



sanded section due to the acrylic piece being snapped off and leaving tear marks

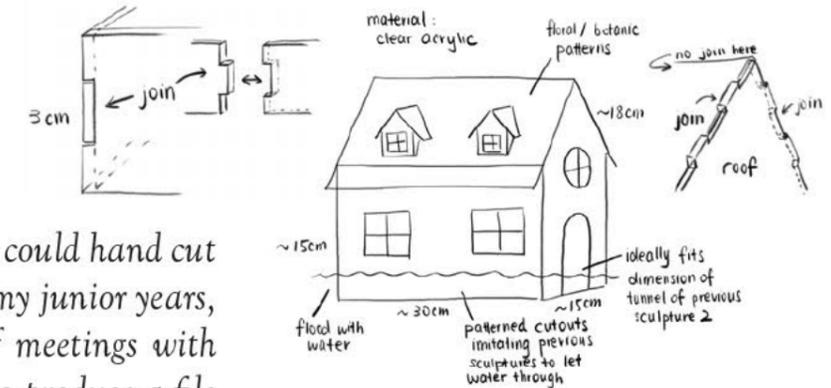


hot glue mess...



Clear acrylic

I was looking for a material that emanated a sense of uncertainty: Did my house still exist? Where did it exist? What was my relationship with it? Clear acrylic was the perfect material to open my board with, creating the right atmosphere I was looking for, but I knew I would have to create a laser cut file to use this material, as there was no way I could hand cut it. Taking inspiration from when I was learning about joinery back in my junior years, I thought, what more could I do with those techniques? After lots of meetings with our technology teachers, calculations and vector drawings, I was able to produce a file for the school machine to cut. Unfortunately however, the intricacy of my design gave the machine a hard time and it frequently malfunctioned or gave up mid-cut, causing me to have to manually sand down the many unrefined parts or forcing us to recut the entire panel multiple times. Originally, I had planned for the design to be even more complex, including proper waves on the walls and a slightly more organic floral pattern on the top, but it quickly became clear that this was just not possible. I did, however, love the accuracy the machine gave me with my designs.



Glue

Throughout the year I had to use many different types of glue and had to deal with their own unique issues. For the clear acrylic, I had to buy a clear superglue from the hardware store and this was very scary to use as it was my first time using superglue. I also didn't want to mess up the painstakingly cut acrylic boards and have to start over, but luckily it worked well. As always, the biggest struggle with hot glue was those pesky strings that kept clinging to my sculptures and were impossible to clear away. For the initial ruined house, I decided that leaving them there could actually contribute to the sculpture as it looked like spider webs in some ways. However, for the other instances where I used hot glue, it was very painful to deal with. I also used PVA glue, which I tried to use sparingly and in small amounts. I liked that it dried clear and was relatively stress-free but it was less durable, especially when I was glueing matchsticks with smaller surface areas together.



The Future

Taking sculpture this year has already opened me to many new avenues of exploration. I was lucky enough to be selected as a finalist for the Secondary School Art Awards run by the Arts House Trust. Although this was not the first time my art had been on display, during the opening ceremony, it felt truly mind-blowing that my work and my message was out there for others to see and understand. However, It was even more amazing seeing all the other works there on display, and seeing so many artists my age willing to take risks beyond what I was comfortable with.



As with most things in life, taking risks is hard, yet I wish I did more of that with my work this year. I definitely think that I could have been more courageous in experimenting with scale. In my brainstorming and planning sessions, I frequently envisioned large gallery spaces displaying 2-3m tall works of mine and was much too scared to commit to any of those ideas. I part of me is also glad that I didn't though, as year 13 is a busy year and I'm glad that I was able to find a study-life balance without risking my sleep on overly ambitious ideas.

If I had much more time, space and lots more spare funds, I would love to scale up my work, including hanging glassine curtains full of cut-outs much like Barbara Earl Thomas's work, or to build a life-sized sculpture (similar to my final one) out of metal pipes and display it exactly in the location that my house used to be. I can imagine children playing in a future park where our former houses have been demolished and maybe, just maybe, one of my sculptures would be there too, not only to commemorate those that lost their homes, but also to serve as a reminder for the families in our community to cherish what they have.

FURTHER IDEAS

