

The object as a creation:

a scenographic methodology



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## THE BEGINNING OF THE RESEARCH

The premise proposed for this research was the use of objects as a starting point for spatial and scenographic creation. To develop this project, I chose the text *The Story of Pandas Bears Told by a Saxophonist who has a Girlfriend in Frankfurt*, by Romanian playwright Matéi Visniec, and I challenged myself to conceive scenographic proposals for this dramaturgy, motivated by objects present in the text or related to it.

I set myself the challenge of using three selected objects as a formal principle of three scenographic projects. I proposed a situation in

which these inanimate elements could function as parties for an aesthetic investigation, covering plastic research in form, color and materiality.

I wanted to investigate the possibility of transposing an experience of perception and exploration of objects as a motto for the development of these spaces. To do so, I carried out practical experiments in scale in order to create small spatial compositions, that I registered in photographs and after developed in scenographic projects.



## THE TALE OF THE PANDA BEARS...

The Story of Pandas Bears Told by a Saxophonist who has a Girlfriend in Frankfurt was written in 1993 by Matei Visniec in an artistic residence. The text, due to its romantic character, differs in some aspects from the author's work, which has a markedly political tone and generally addresses themes related to political and humanitarian crises, such as wars, migrations, social conflicts. In some moments, however, the text approaches an aesthetic of the theatre of the absurd, with which the author dialogues in many of his works.

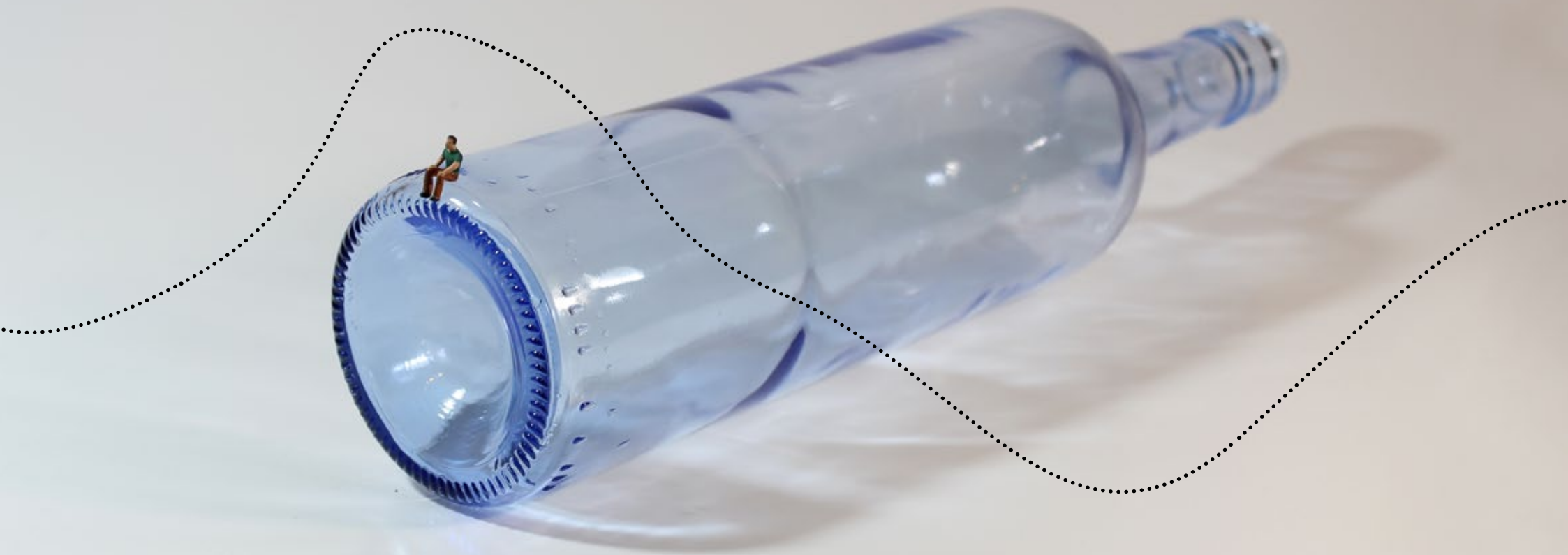
In the play, a couple called He and She, wake up together without remembering exactly why they are together or how they met. He asks her not to leave, to give him nine nights to get to know each other, and the text unfolds throughout those nights. Little by little, the nature of the space in which they are, which is configured as a place almost outside of time - is his flat and at the same time an indefinite, unreal place, on the threshold between dream and reality.



## THE SELECTION OF THE DRAMATURGY AND OBJECTS

Visniéc's text adapts well to the proposed work methodology precisely because dramaturgy flirts with a realistic aesthetic, with a space that sometimes gets confused with a concrete space, with its architecture, furniture and real objects, but that at the same time proves to be a non-realistic space, a space of delirium or dream.

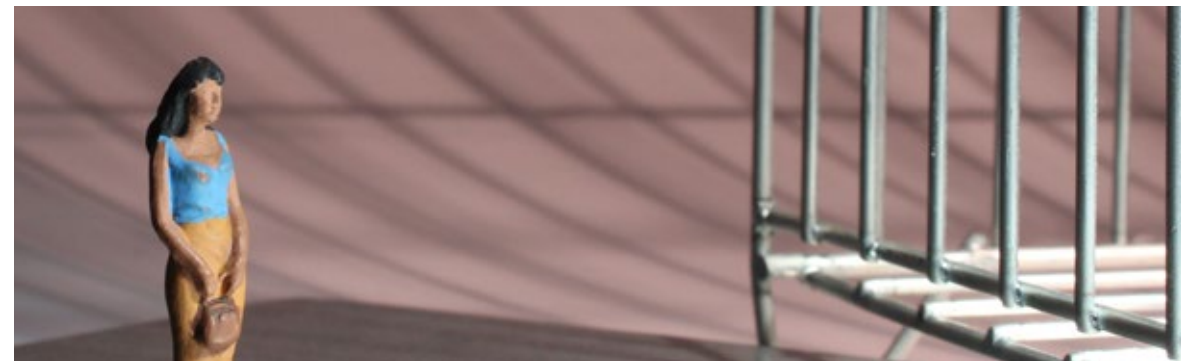
From the reading of the text, I chose some objects more linked to the proposal and aesthetics of dramaturgy, and that, at the same time, seemed more interesting to be explored in experiences in scale.



wine bottle

clock

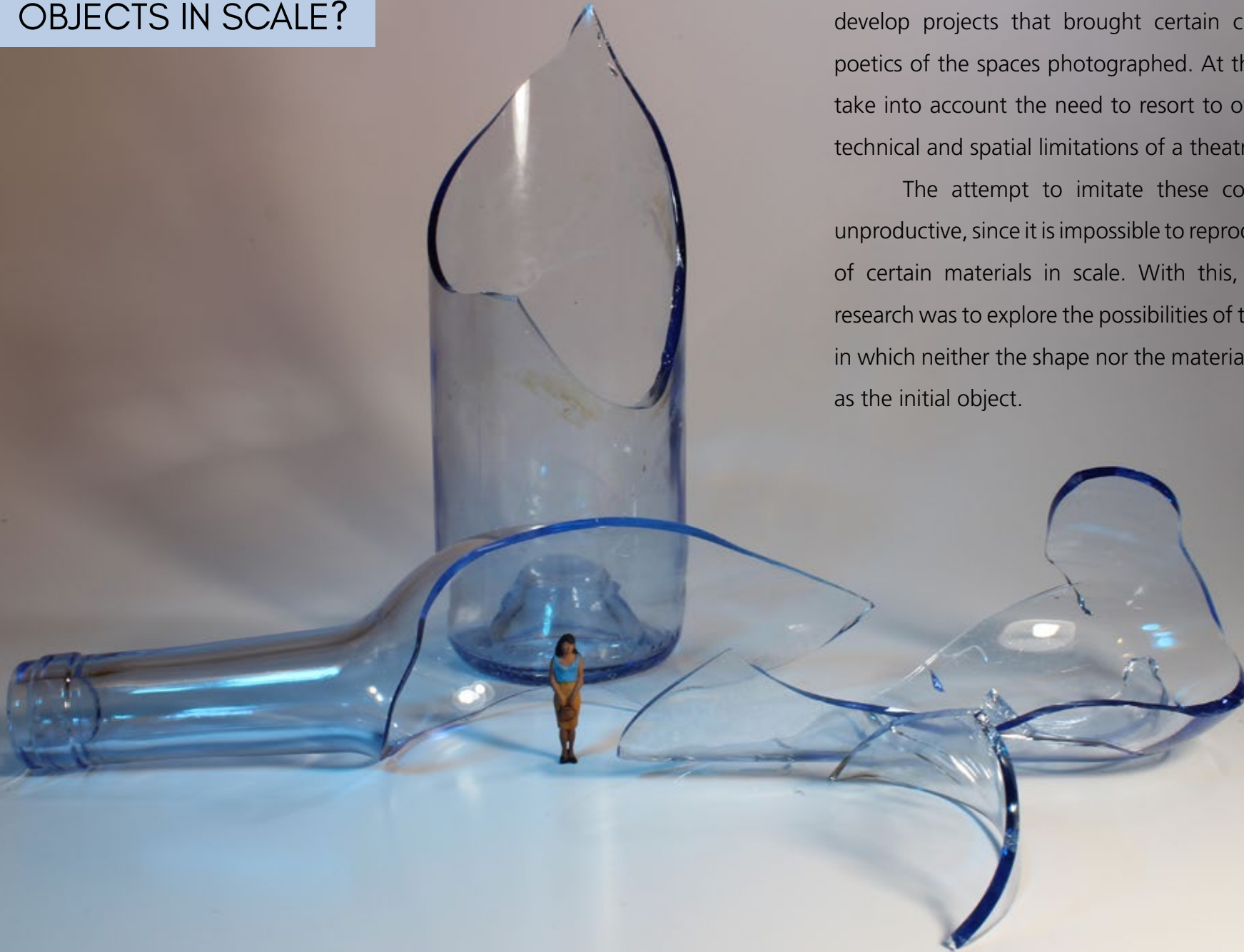
cage



Using these objects – not necessarily in their original form, but in some cases broken, disassembled, transformed – and scale figures, I created compositions in which I suggested spatial and aesthetic possibilities, that I registered in photographs. After experimenting with different scales and possibilities, I chose some pictures I considered more interesting and decided to develop some of these small spaces in real projects.

HOW TO TRANSLATE THESE

OBJECTS IN SCALE?

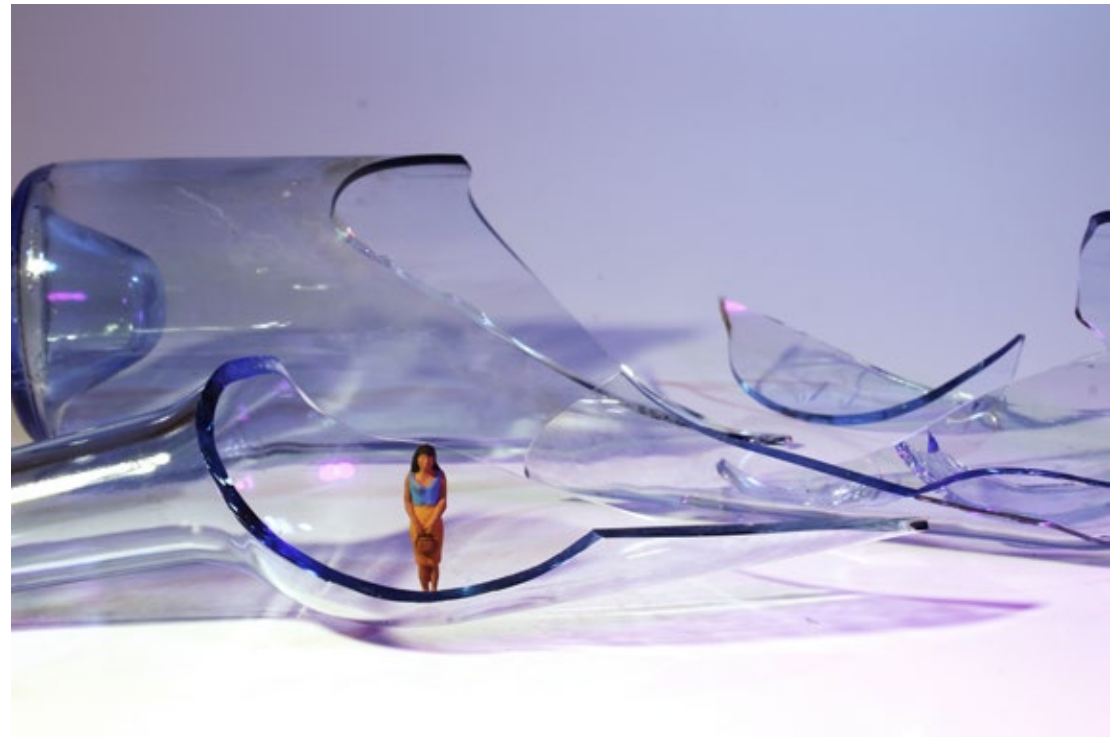


I quickly realized it would be complex to transpose these compositions to a real scale, because it would be necessary to develop projects that brought certain characteristics and the poetics of the spaces photographed. At the same time, I had to take into account the need to resort to other materials and the technical and spatial limitations of a theatrical space.

The attempt to imitate these compositions would be unproductive, since it is impossible to reproduce the characteristics of certain materials in scale. With this, the challenge of the research was to explore the possibilities of this translation process, in which neither the shape nor the materiality would be the same as the initial object.

bottle

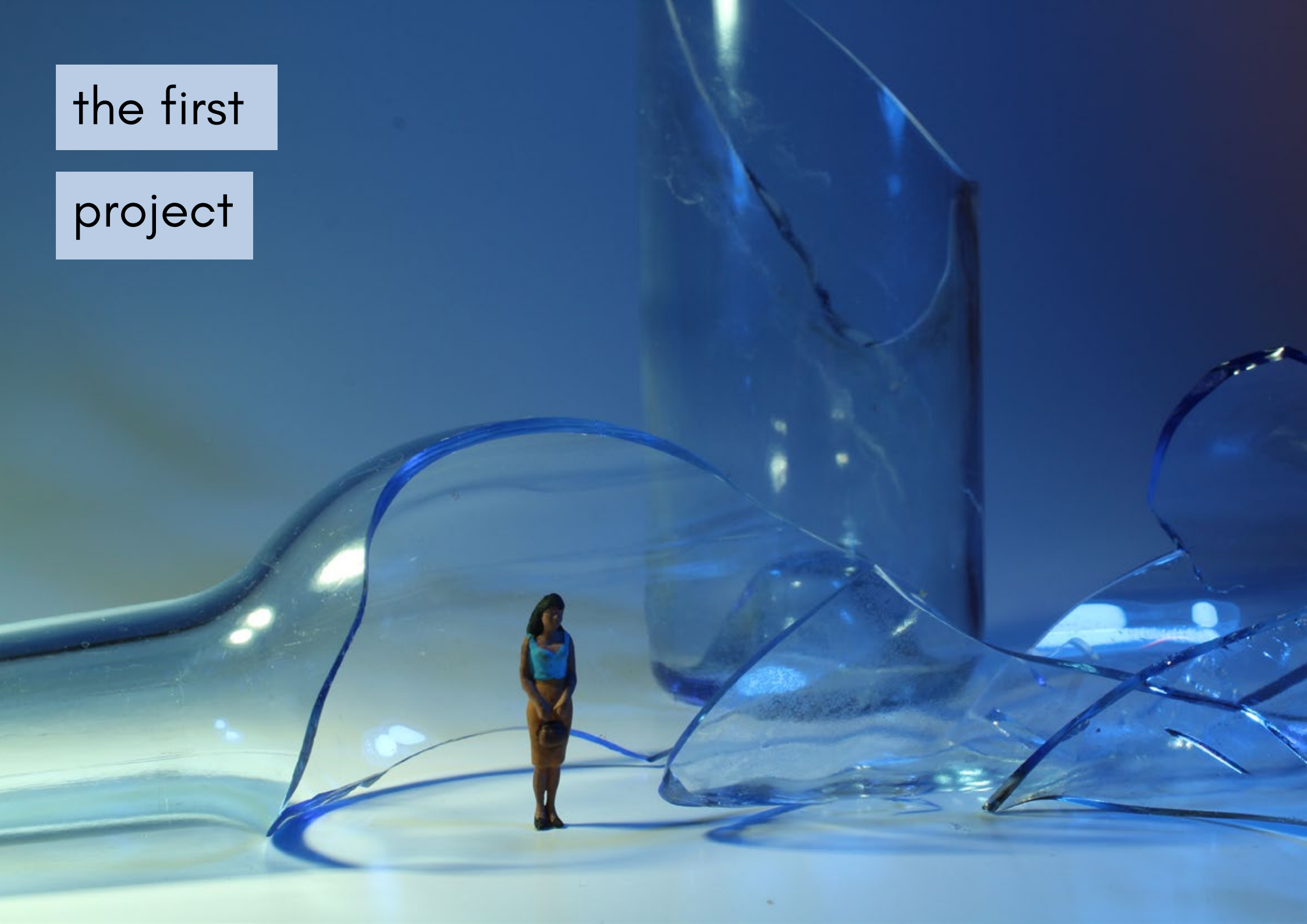




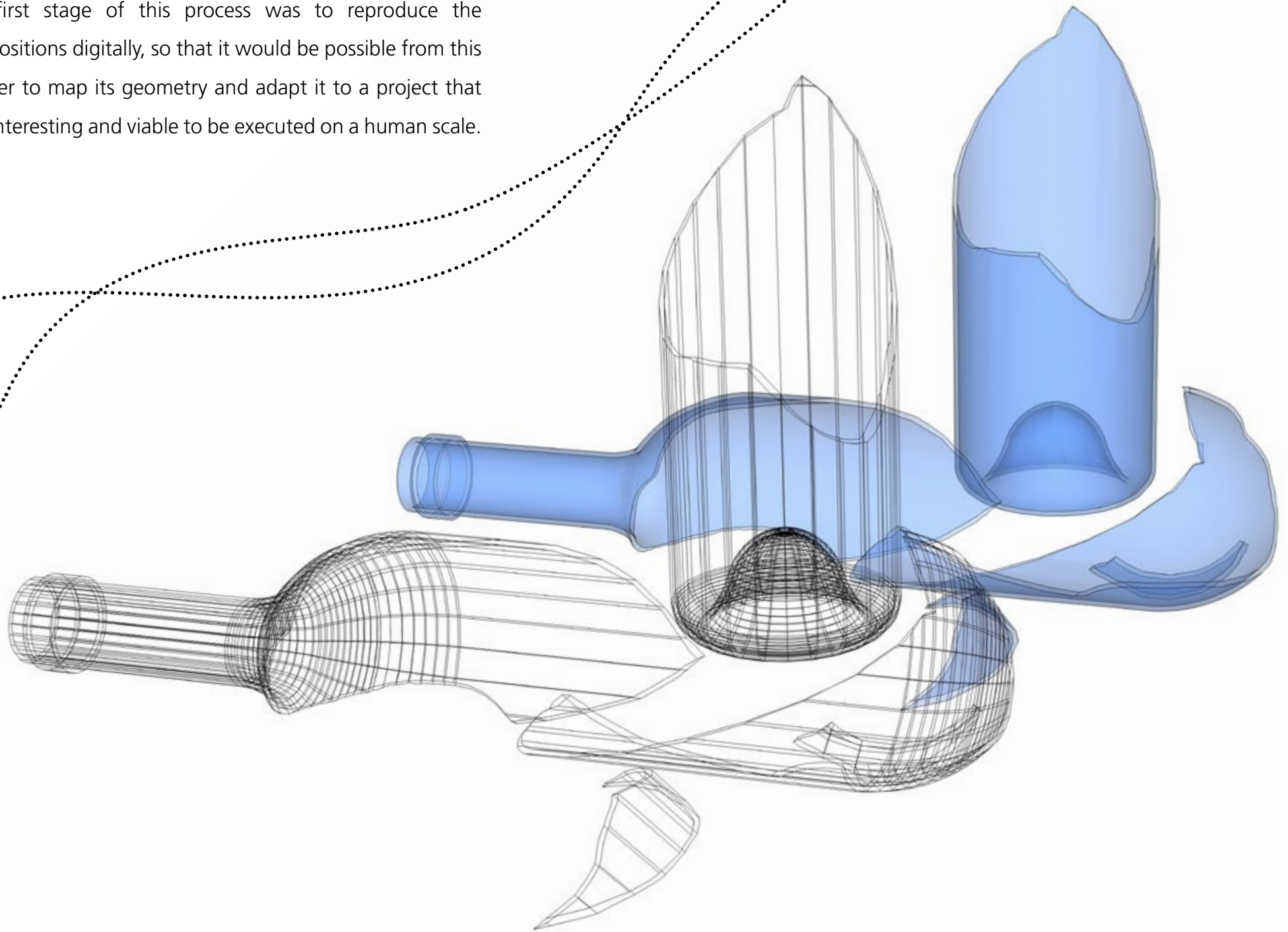


the first

project



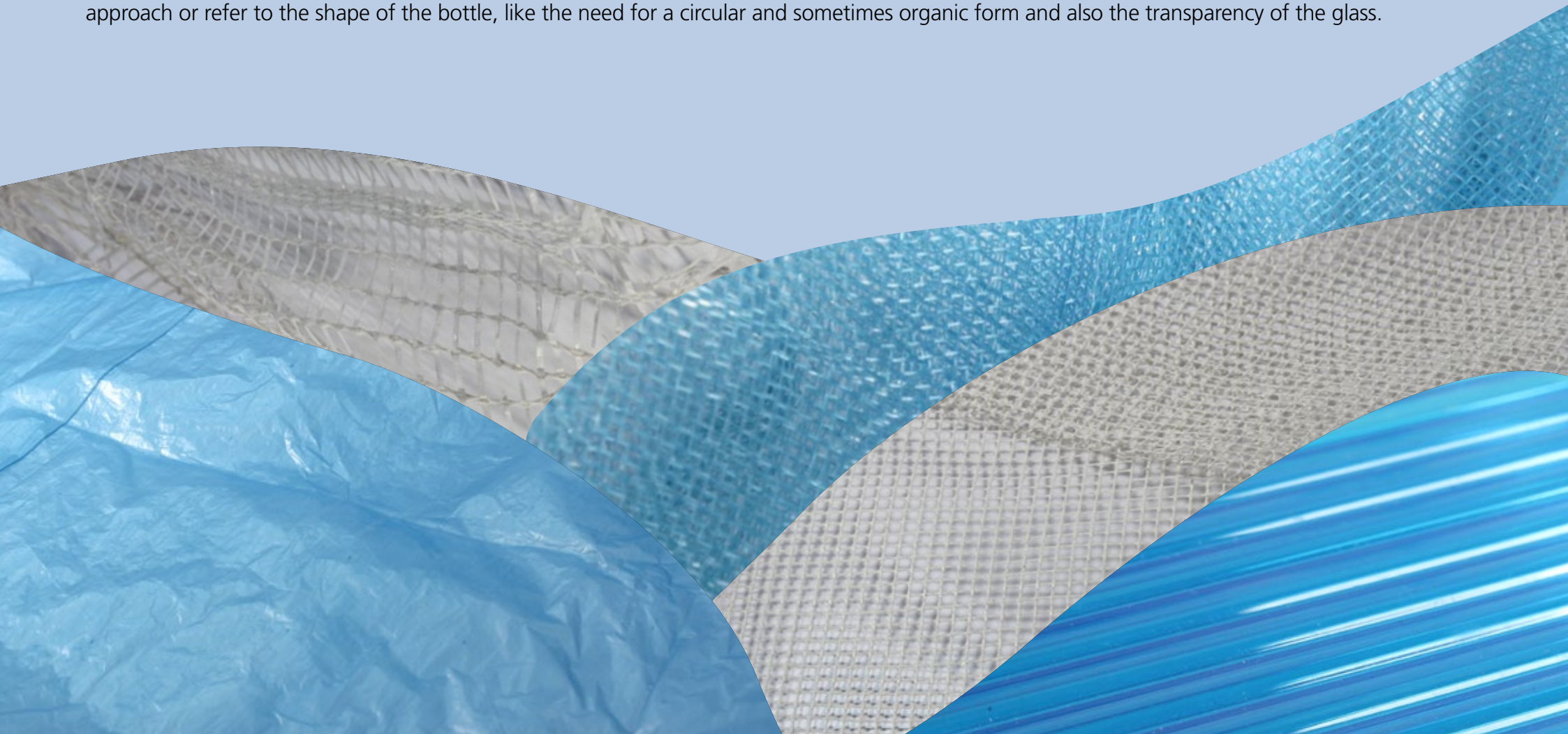
The first stage of this process was to reproduce the compositions digitally, so that it would be possible from this register to map its geometry and adapt it to a project that was interesting and viable to be executed on a human scale.



# MATERIAL RESEARCH

The research of materials appeared as a first path to follow, because to reproduce a curved structure, with characteristics similar to those of glass would be almost impossible considering the limitations of the material - the need for modulation, the weight, forms of fixation, etc. - and the ephemeral character of a theatrical set. Moreover, considering the context of Brazilian theatrical production, working with this type of material would be unrealistic.

I selected some material options, like polycarbonate, acrylic, different kinds of plastics, nets and fabrics, but none seemed to point out to a solution for the project. Each one had characteristics that were interesting, but none of them seemed to meet the demands for a structure that would approach or refer to the shape of the bottle, like the need for a circular and sometimes organic form and also the transparency of the glass.

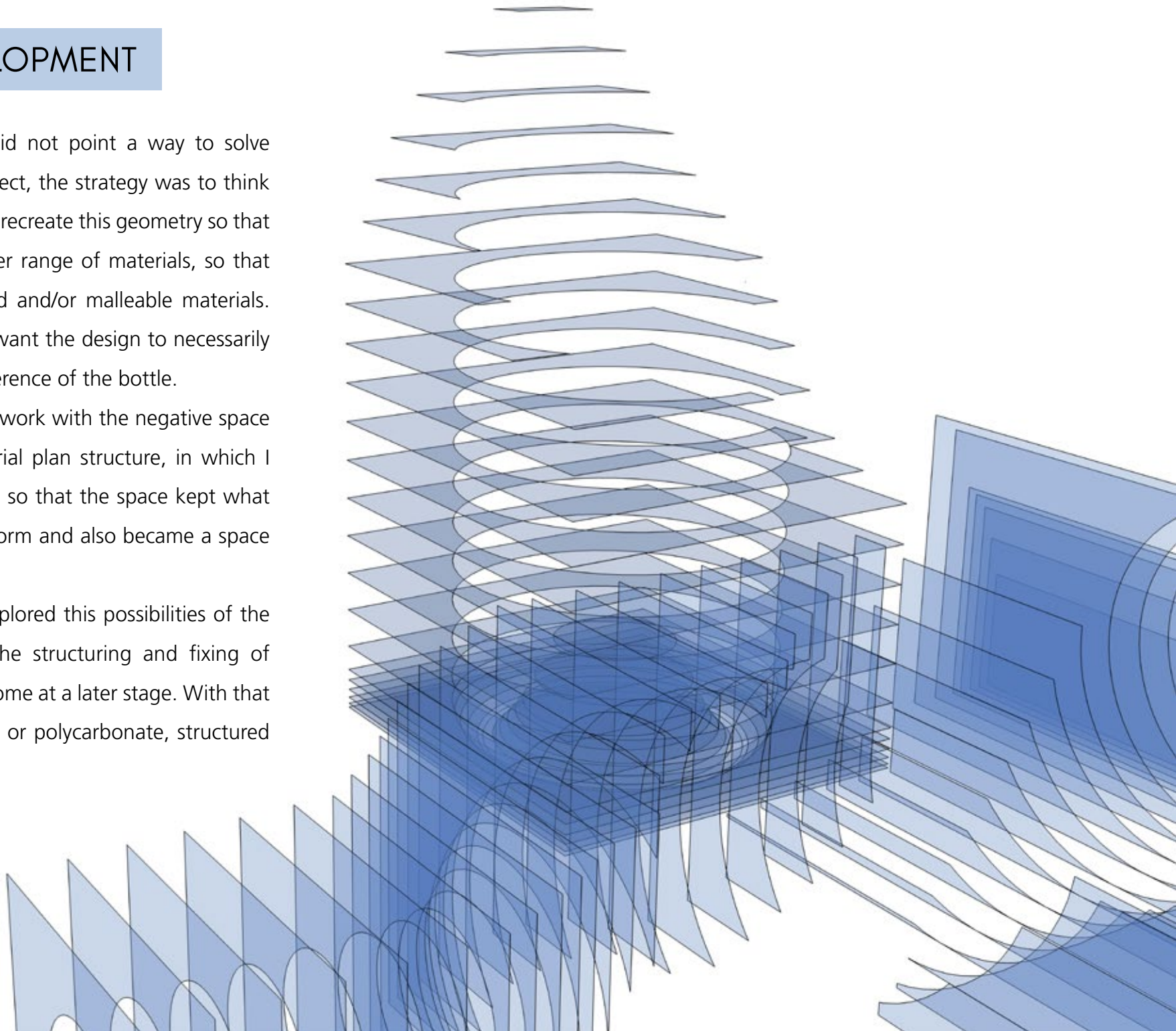


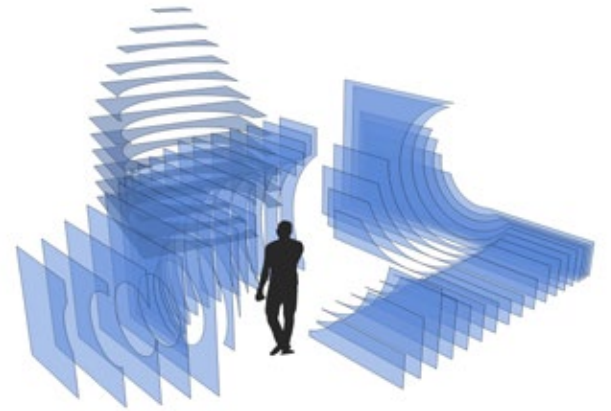
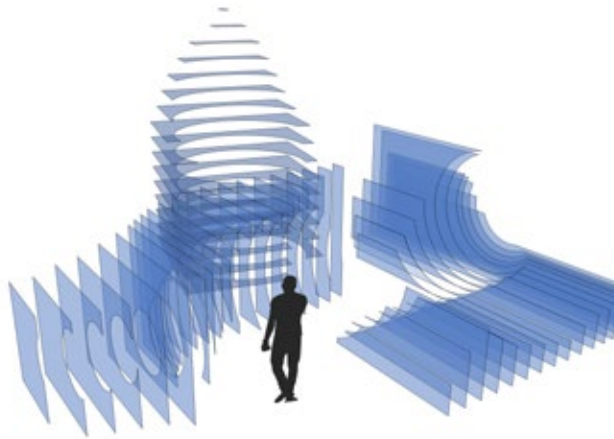
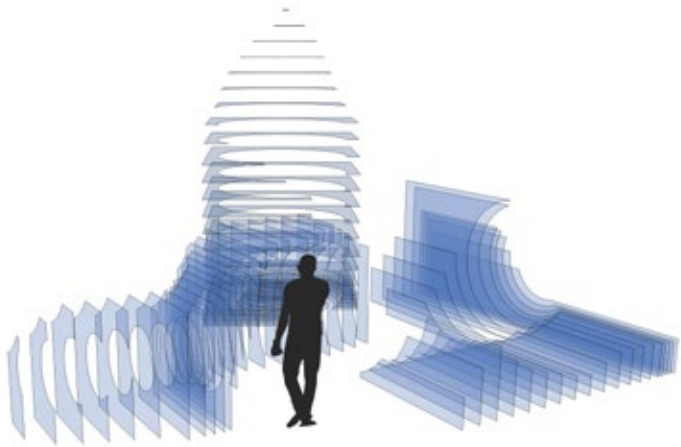
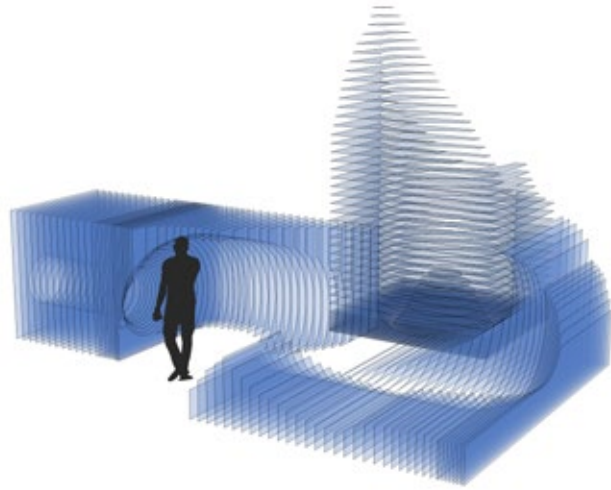
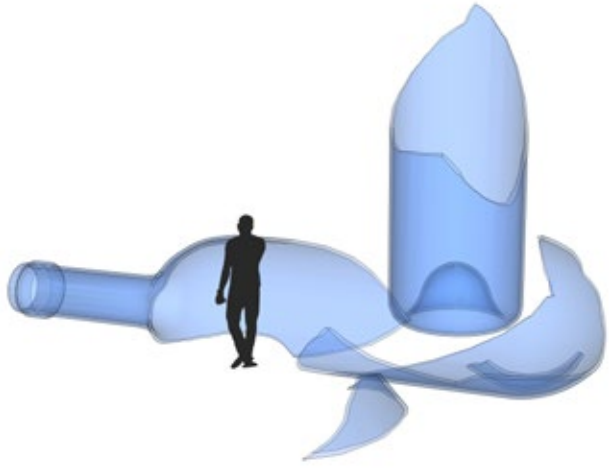
## FORMAL DEVELOPMENT

As the materials research did not point a way to solve the formal needs of the project, the strategy was to think about how it was possible to recreate this geometry so that it could be built with a wider range of materials, so that it did not depend on curved and/or malleable materials. At the same time, I did not want the design to necessarily keep so clearly the initial reference of the bottle.

So the option was to work with the negative space of the object, through a serial plan structure, in which I used the form of the bottle so that the space kept what was interesting in its initial form and also became a space with potential for the scene.

At that moment, I explored this possibilities of the form without considering the structuring and fixing of these planes, which would come at a later stage. With that option, I could use the glass or polycarbonate, structured with metal tubes

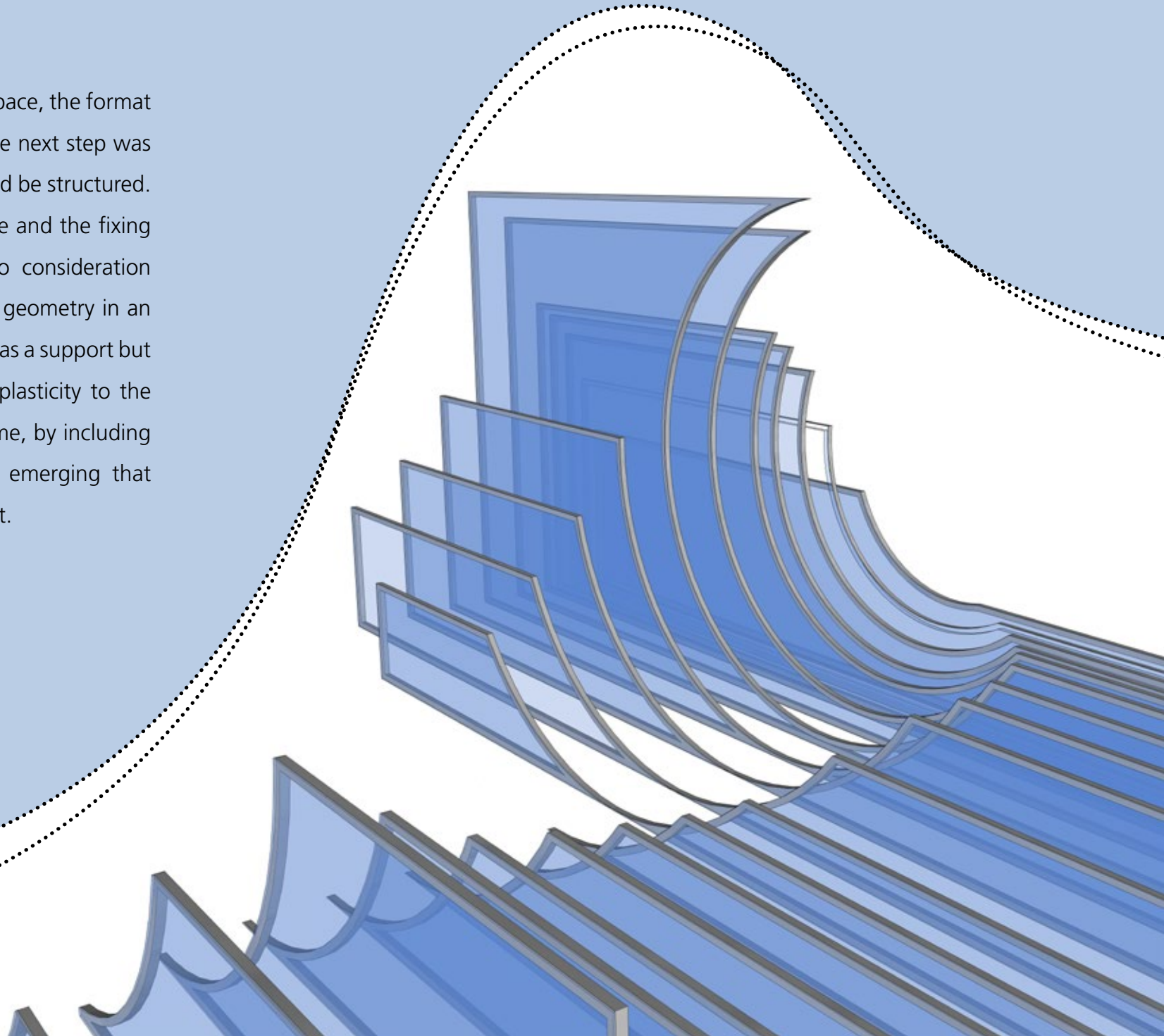




## SUPPORT STRUCTURE

After defining the geometry of this space, the format and measurements of the planes, the next step was to think about how these plans would be structured.

The definition of the structure and the fixing of the project needed to take into consideration how to dialogue with the proposed geometry in an interesting way, functioning not only as a support but also as something that would add plasticity to the design of this space. At the same time, by including this structure, other changes were emerging that changed the final form of the project.

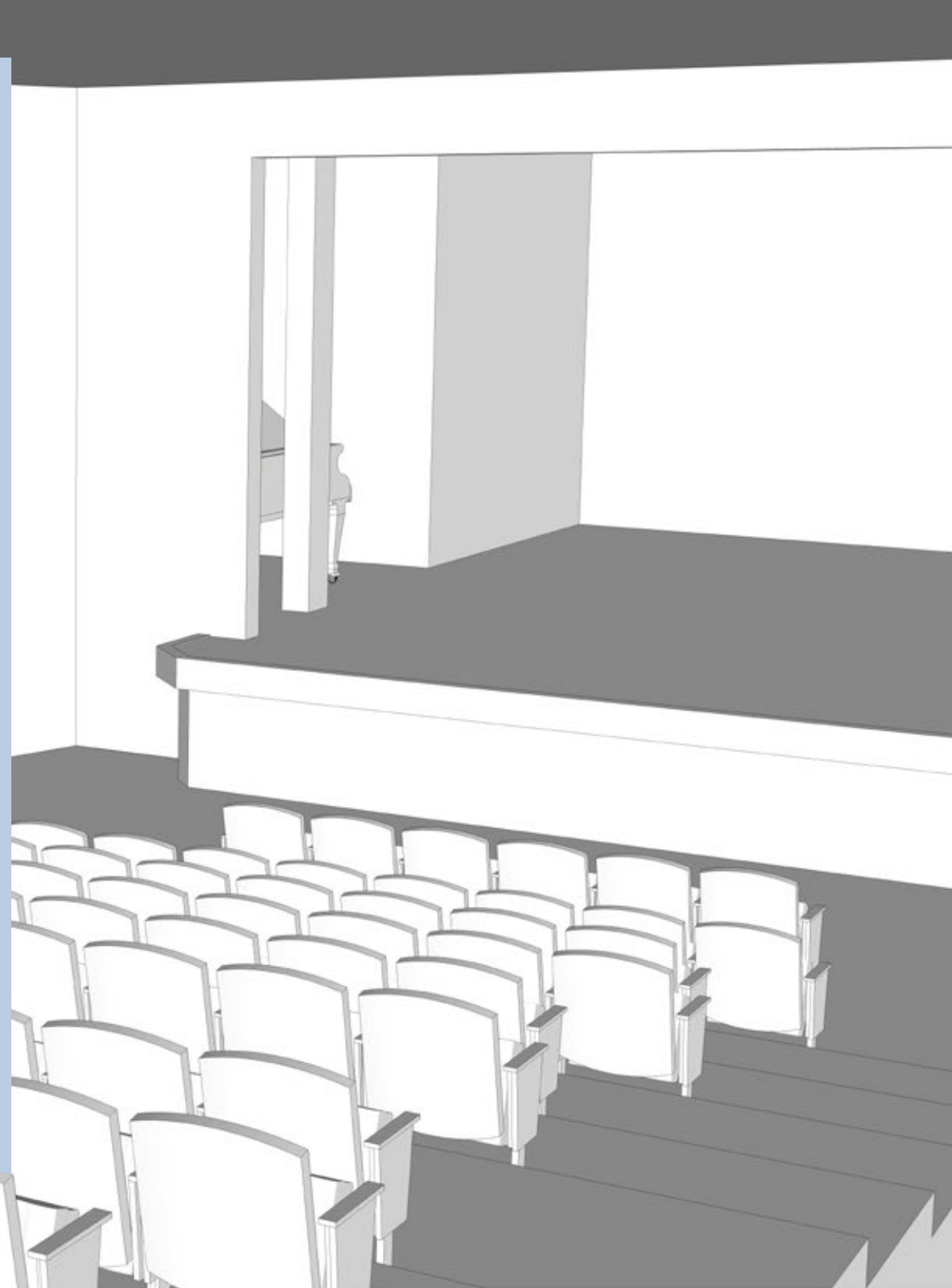


## IMPLEMENTATION IN THE THEATRE

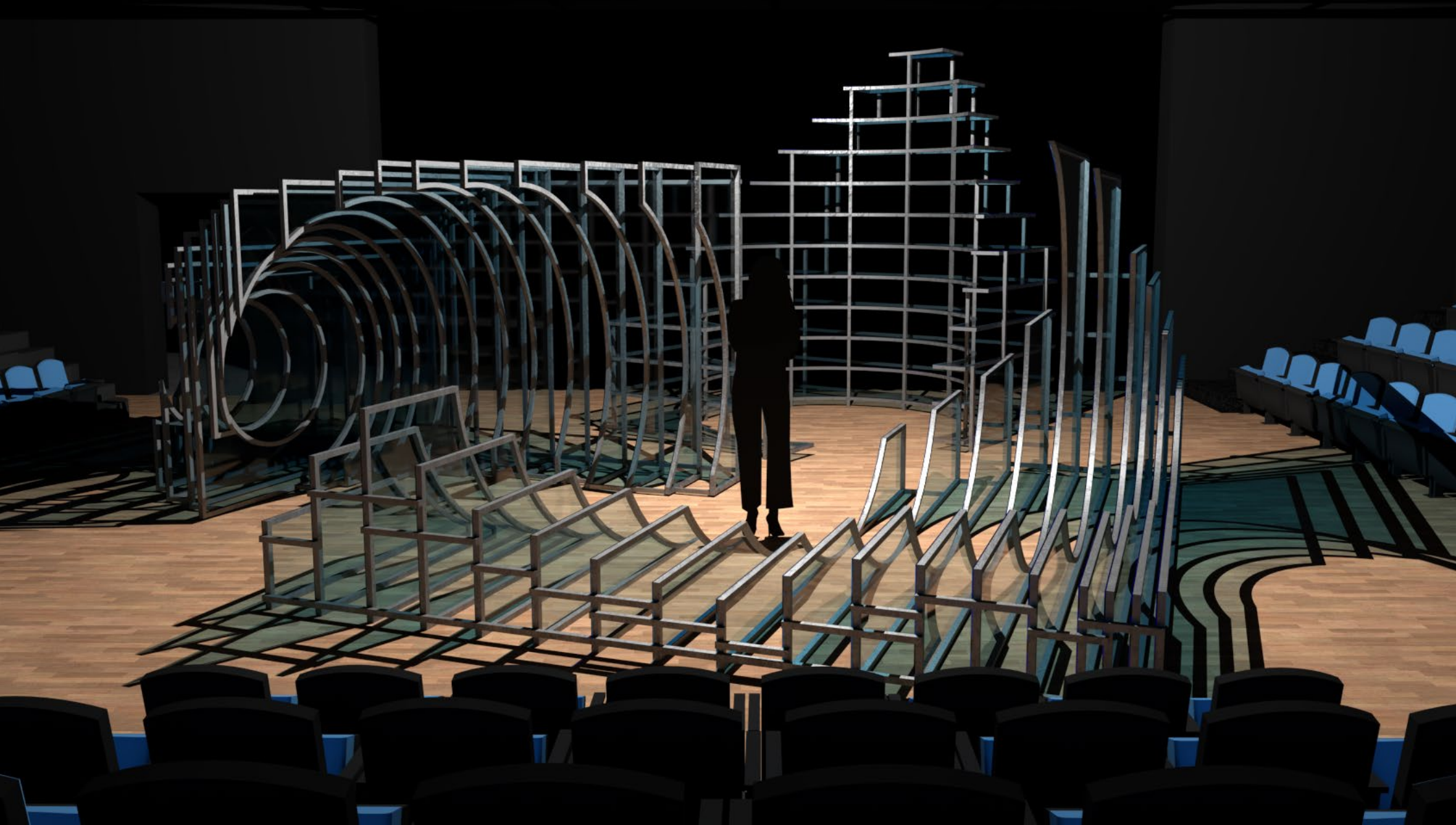
I experimented the implementation of the scenario in several theaters in the city of Rio de Janeiro in order to investigate the scale of the project, which also interfered in the shape of the structure. Initially I tried to work with an Italian stage, of small dimensions - closer to my working reality. However, working with such a small theater changed a lot the relationship between the actor and the scenography - in the reference photography, the structure was much bigger, sheltering the human figure, while in a small theater this became impossible.

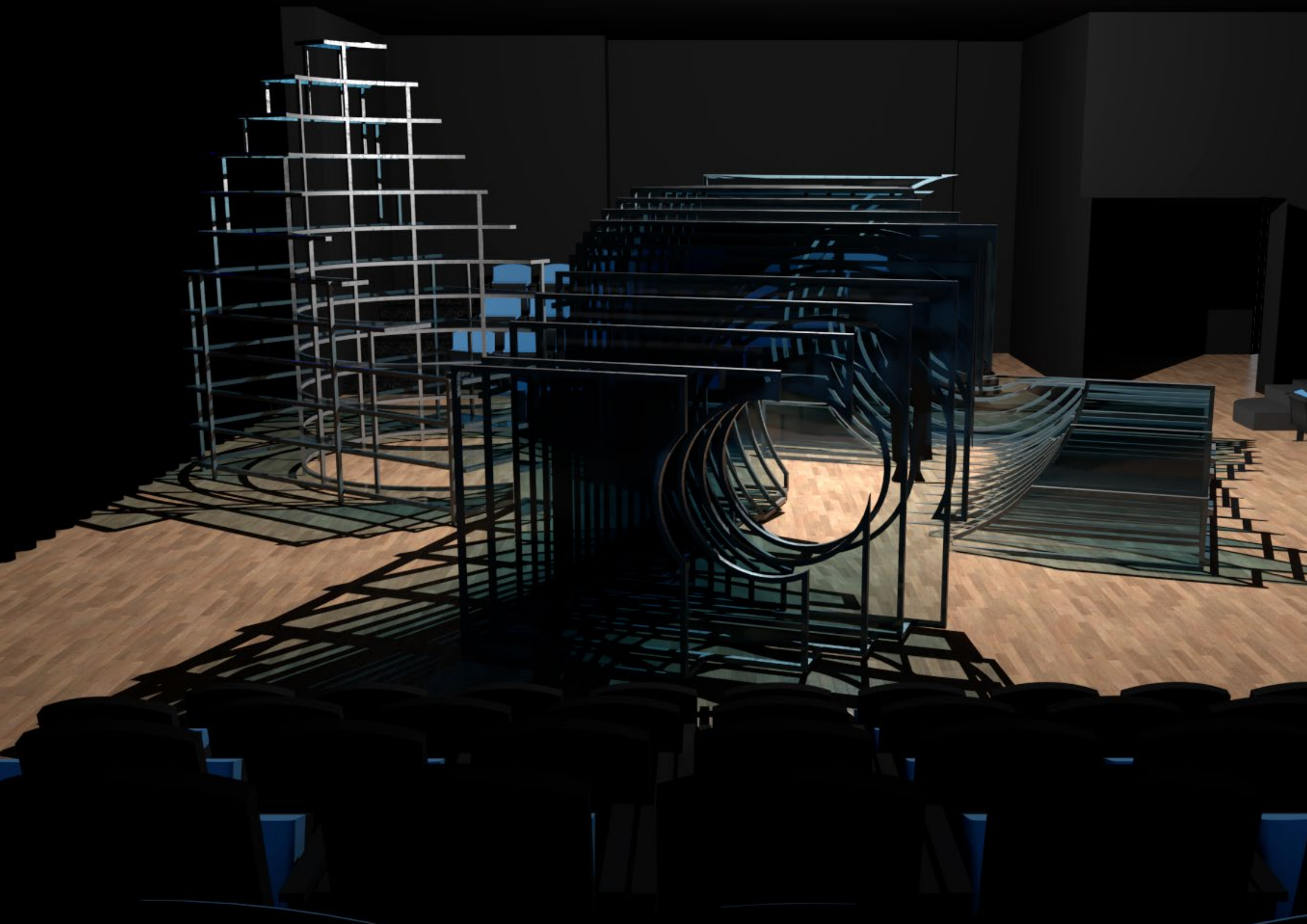
Throughout the investigation, a space in an arena or semi-arena, in which the audience could have multiple visions, began to make much more sense. The project was not designed to fit into a logic of frontality, and I felt the seriation of the plans and the transparency of the chosen material evoked different possibilities of looking, like the spectator was peeking into the intimacy of the characters

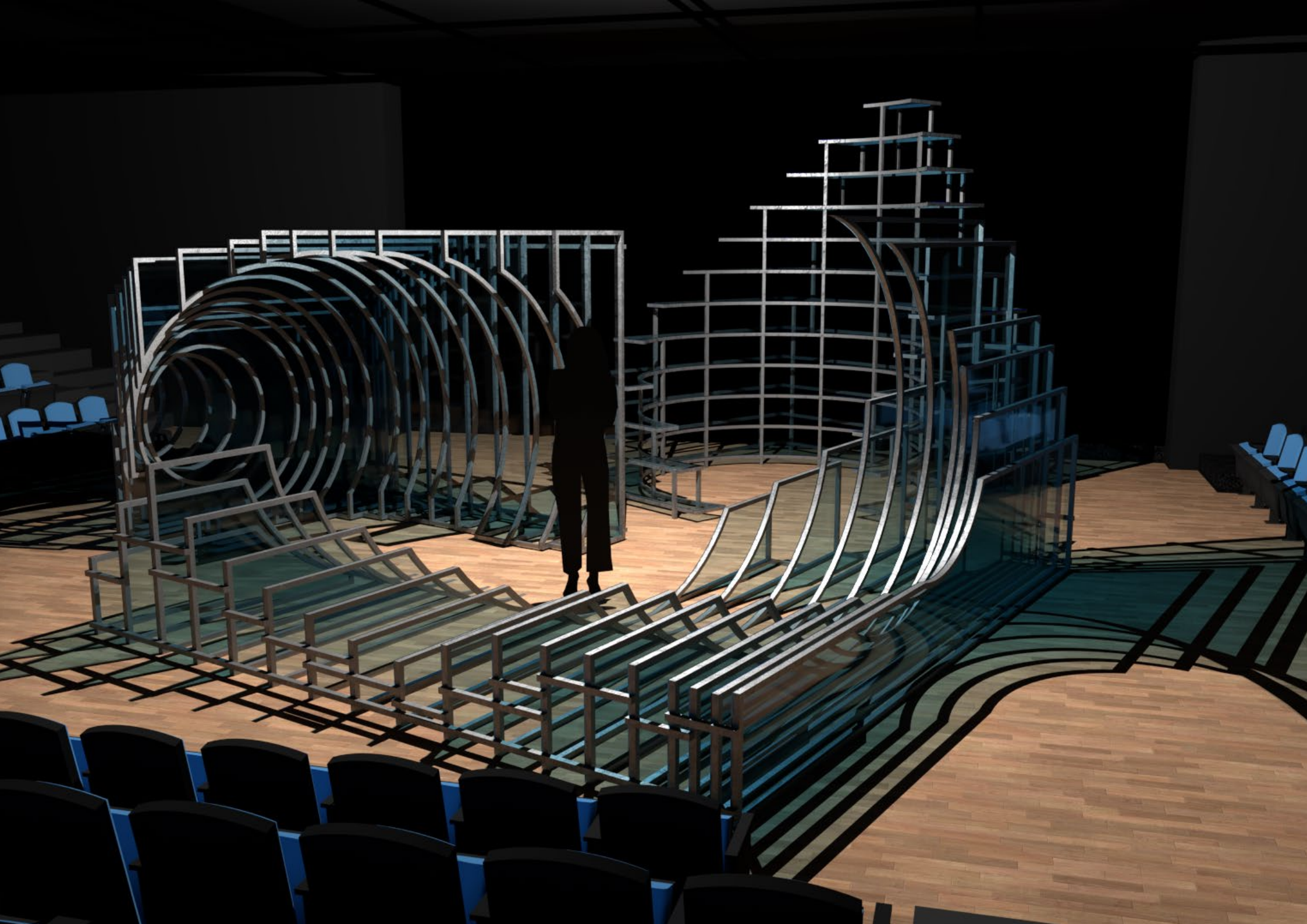
The choice for a scenographic project with a visibility that is not totally free provokes the viewer to exercise an almost voyeuristic look on this couple - observing them through the gaps, through the layers.

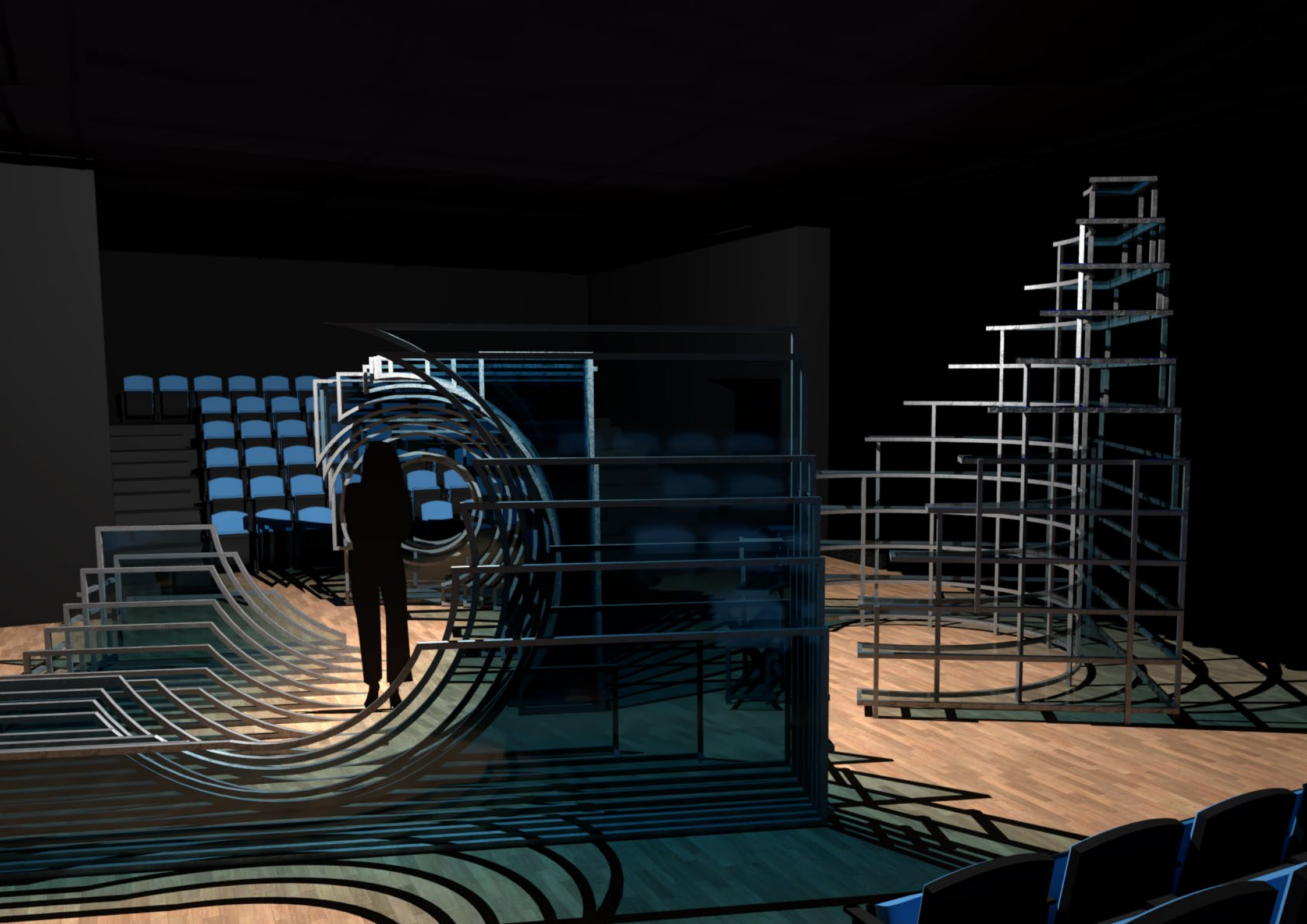


# FINAL SETTING



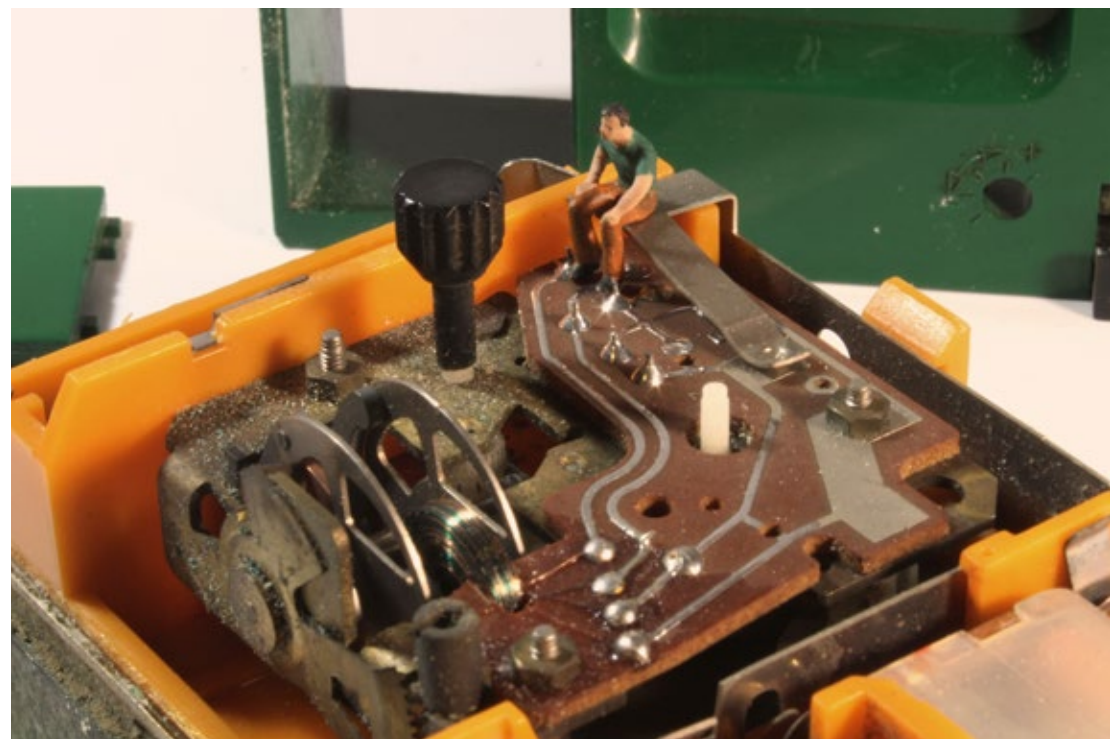
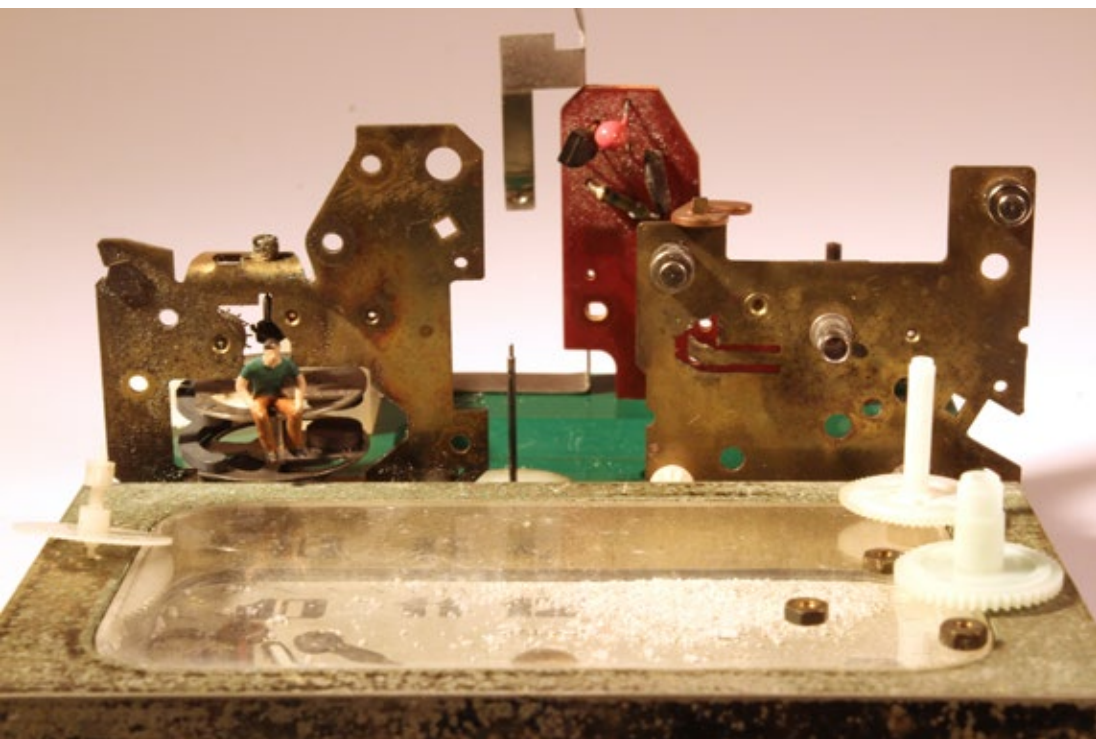






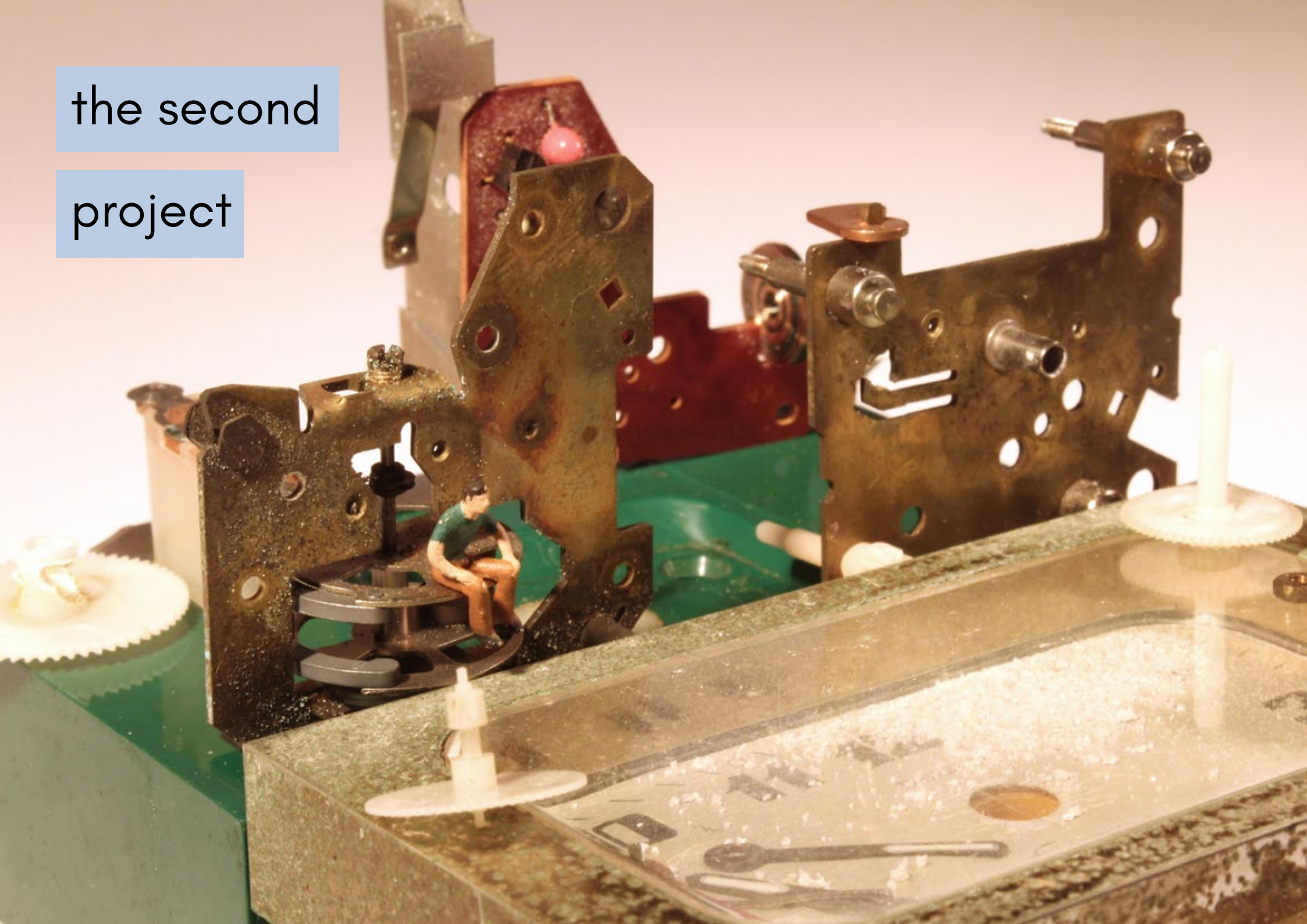
alarm clock





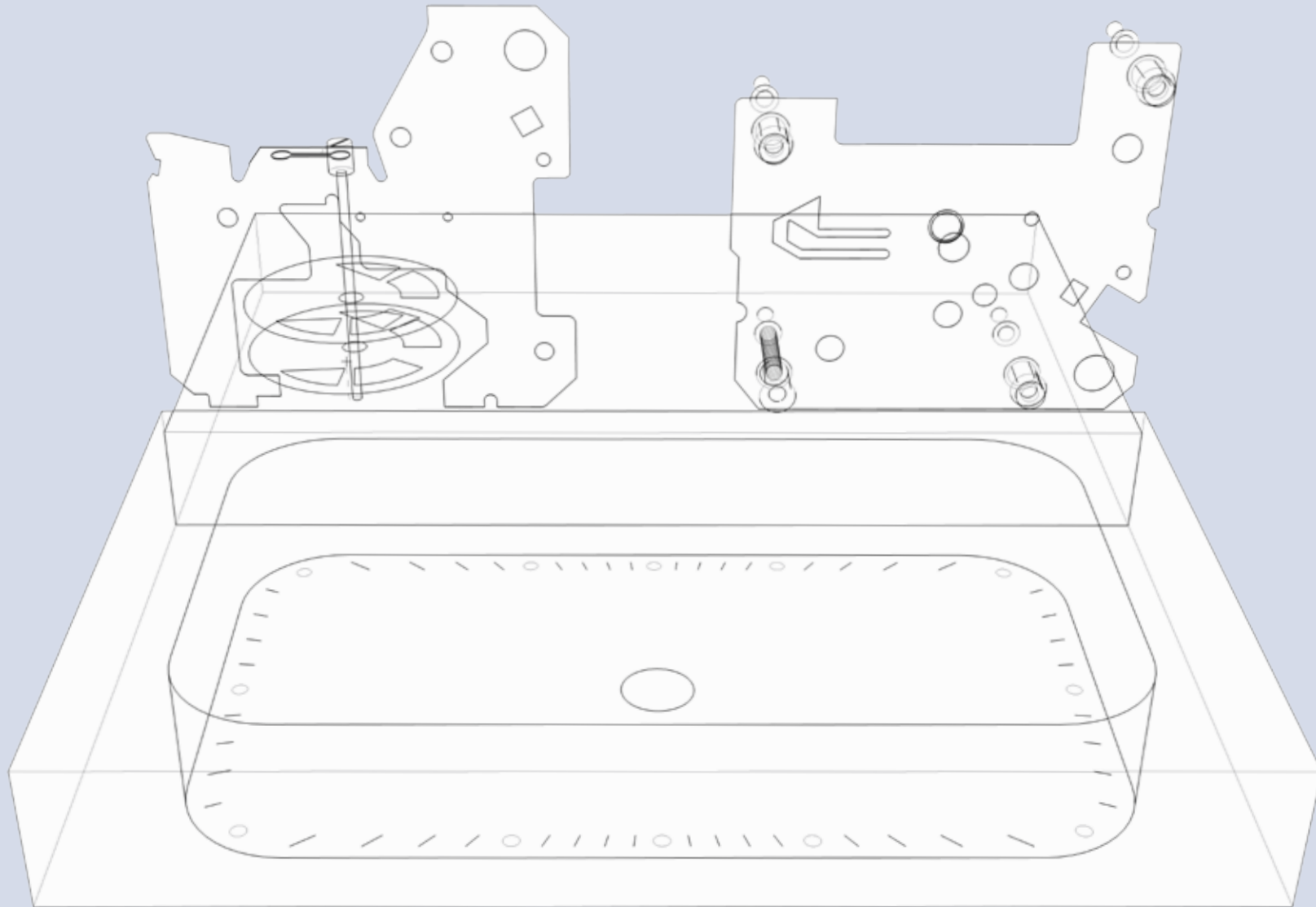
the second

project



In the second project, I worked with the photographs made from compositions of the internal and external pieces of an alarm clock. Unlike working with the bottle, I did not find it necessary to make such an accurate reproduction of all the elements and pieces of the image,

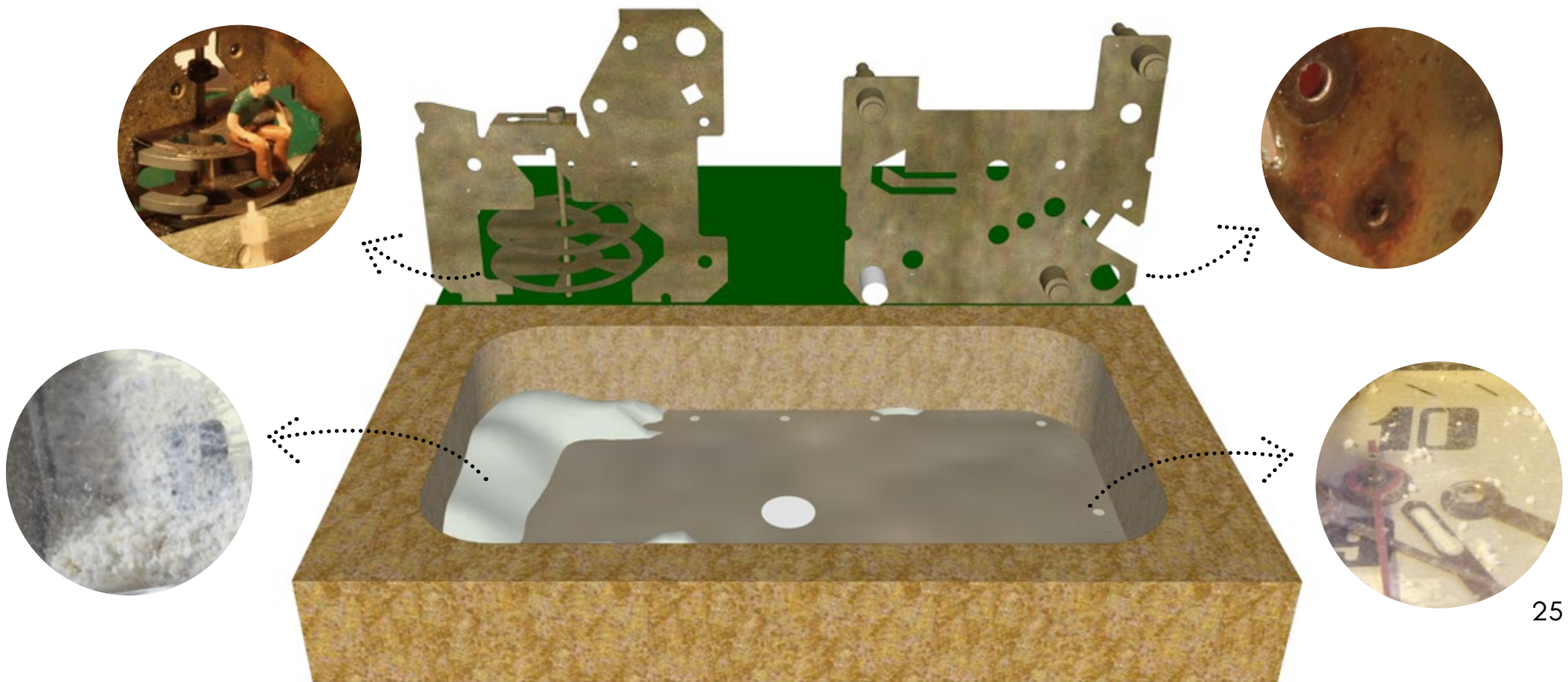
since I was not interested in working with the precise reproduction of details of the photograph. So I initially recreated the main structures of the photographed space, mainly those that had elements that I would like to use in the project.



## FORMS, TEXTURES AND MATERIALS

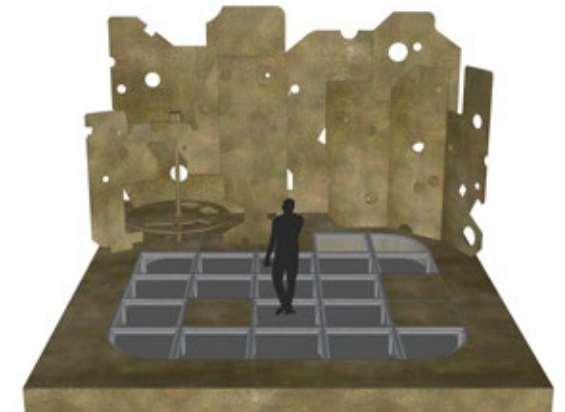
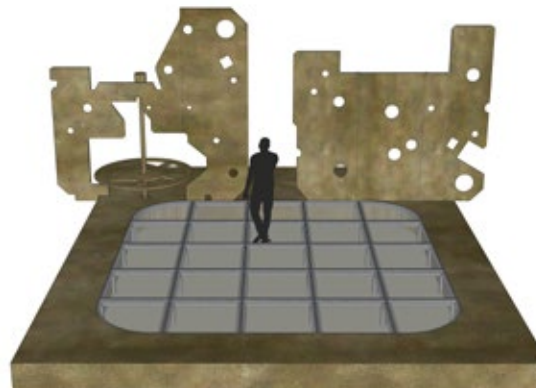
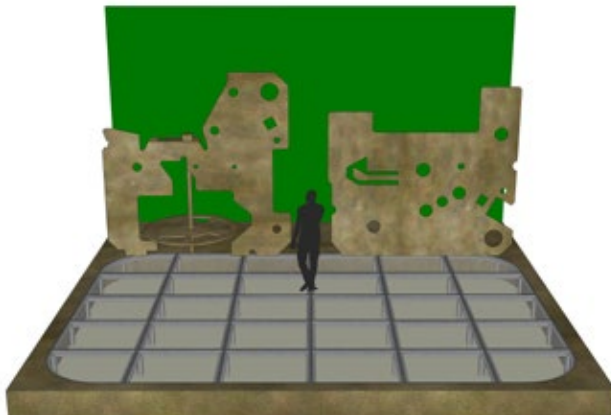
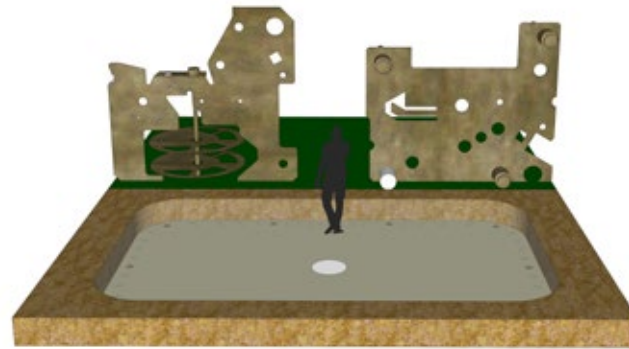
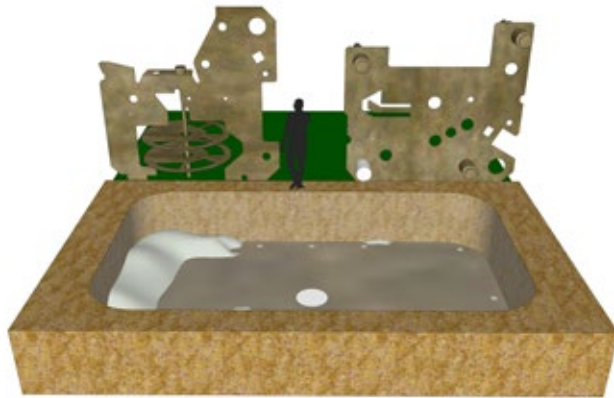
I selected within the composition some elements that attracted me for the construction of the project, like some forms, textures and materials. Examples were the shape of the internal metallic pieces, with their irregularities and holes, the glass of the clock display creating a transparent floor with loose pieces in the middle of a kind of dust, and also the rotating piece in one of the structures.

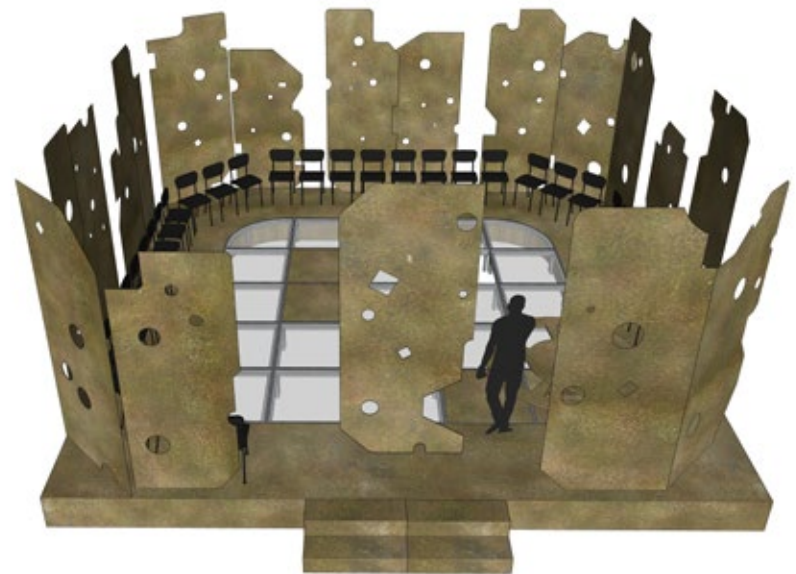
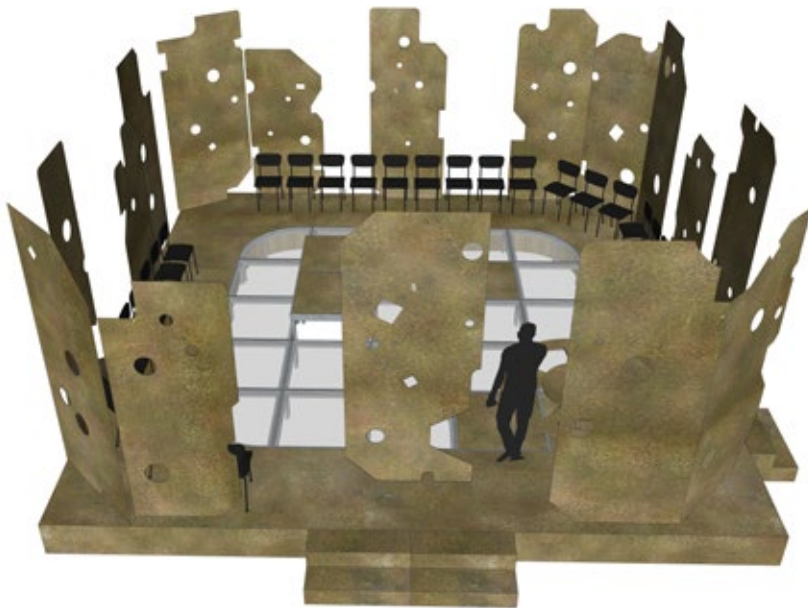
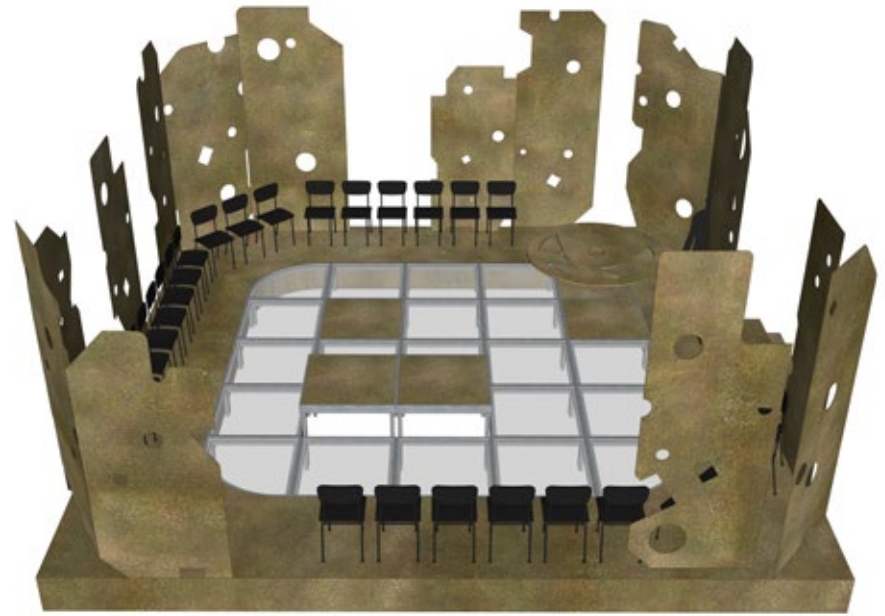
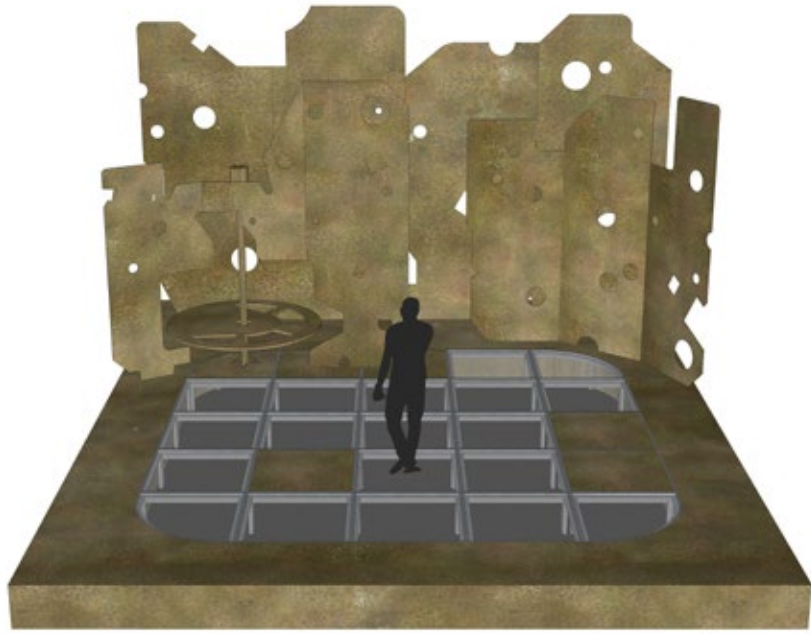
The possibility of working on a scenographic project using the elements of the disassembly of a clock seemed very coherent to me, due to the presence of the temporal element in Visniec's text is very strong



## FORMAL DEVELOPMENT

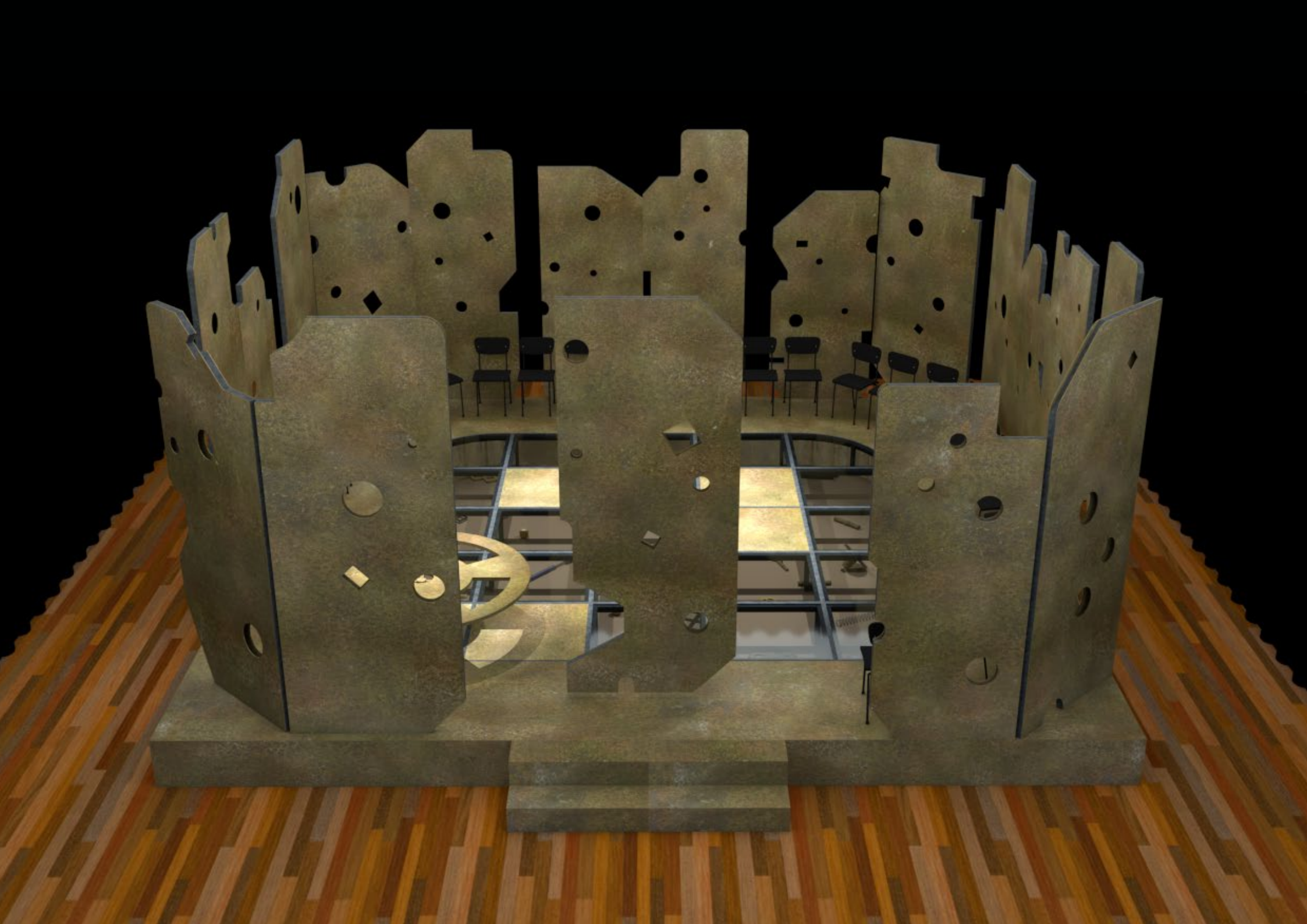
I started working with the geometry of the internal parts of the clock, with its irregularities and small circular or square holes. However, at first, the project seemed to point to a grandiose scale, far away from the atmosphere that the text brings. Besides reducing the size of the space, I experimented a 3/4 arena layout rather than an Italian stage, but the audience's relationship with the scene still seemed quite distant and hierarchical. I realized the need to include the audience in the space of the scene, thus contemplating the intimacy the text demanded. So I decided to implant the project in a multipurpose space.



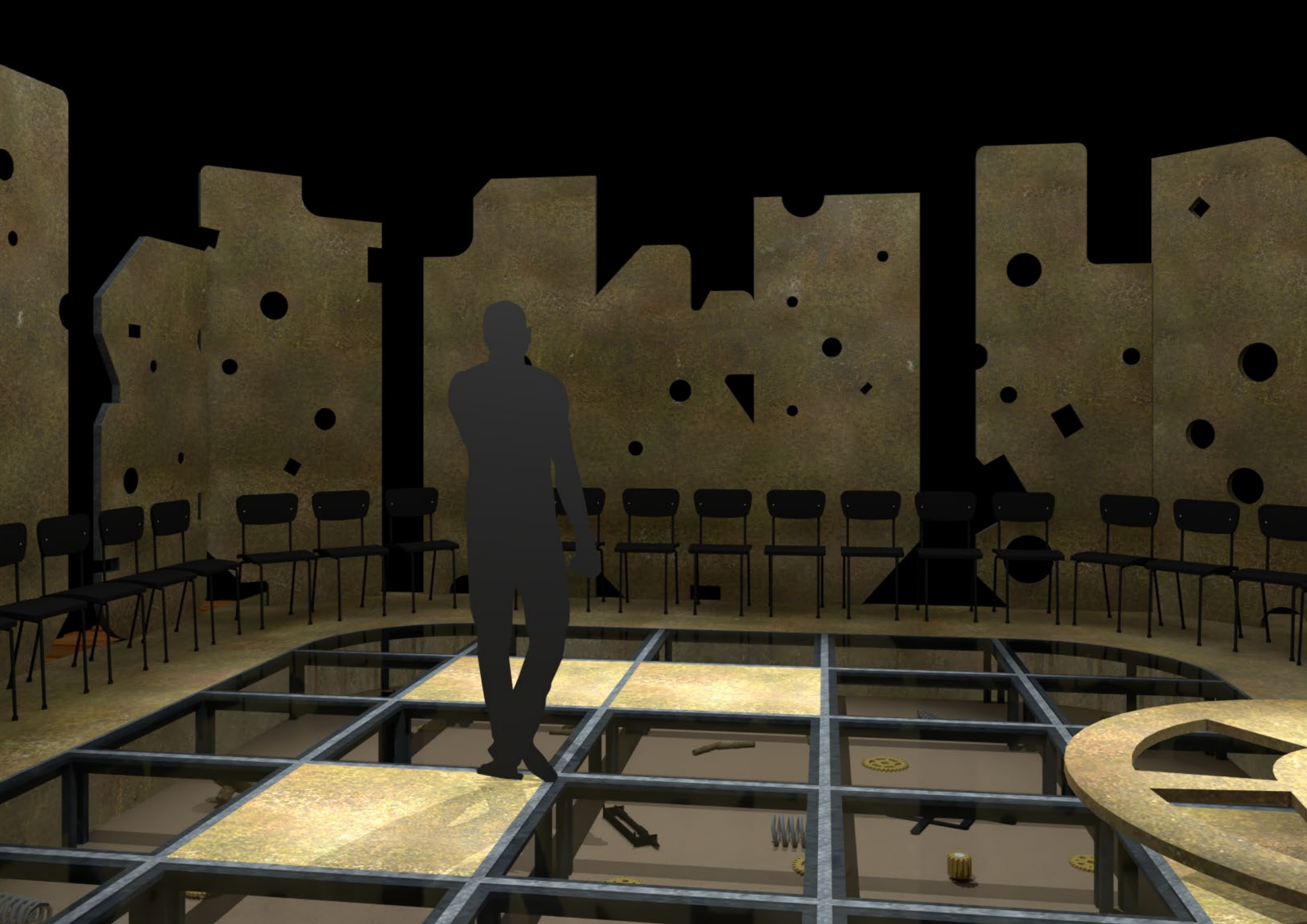


FINAL SETTING



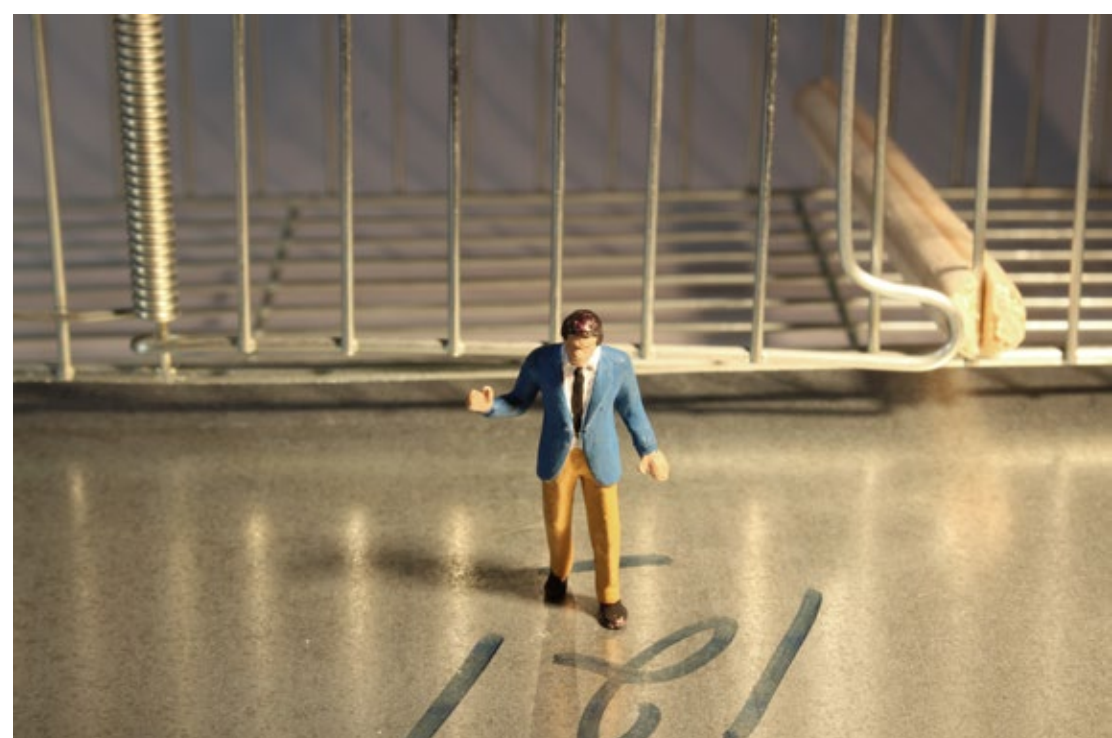
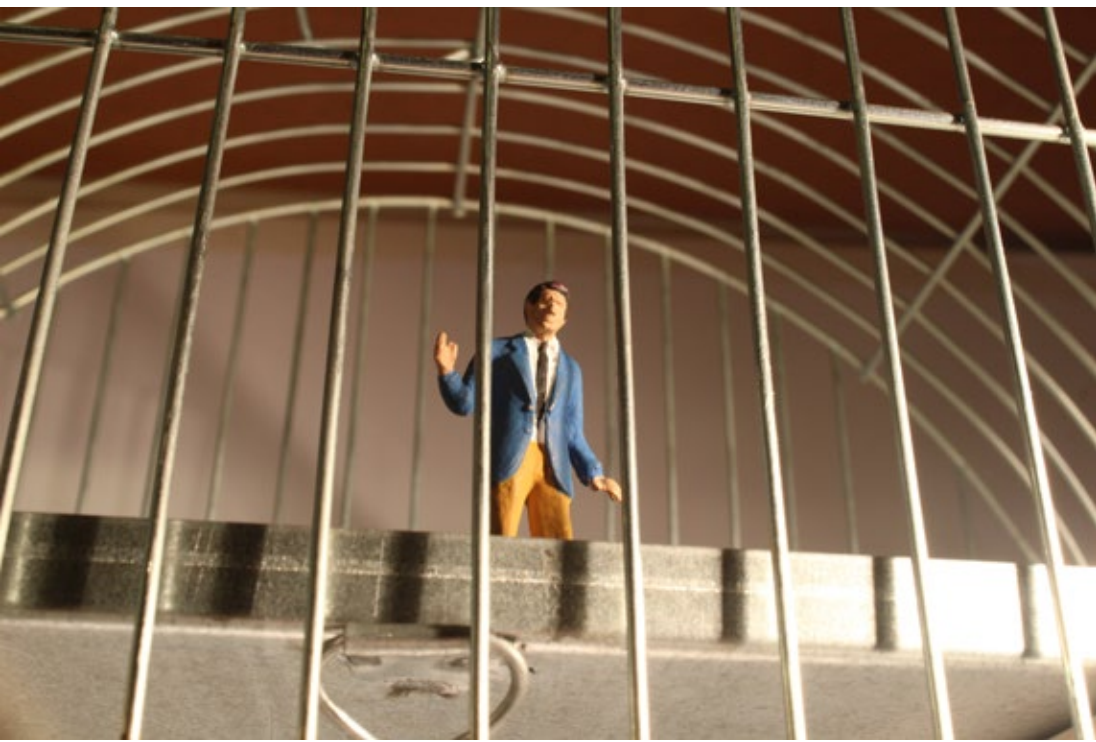






cage





the third

project



## THE IMAGE OF THE CAGE

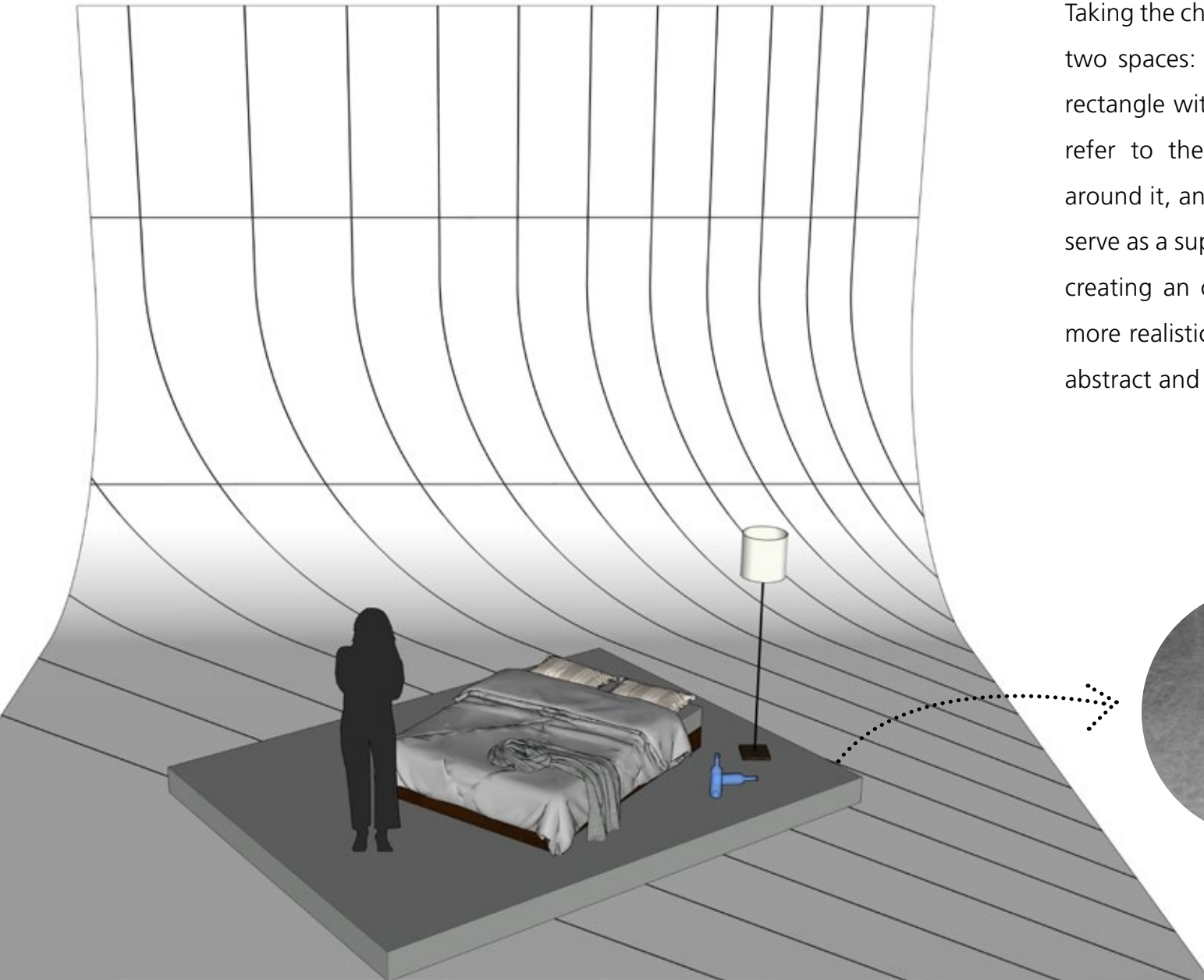
When I started the third project, a question immediately arose to me: how to deal with the cage without suggesting an idea of imprisonment? Although the cage is an important element of the text, the reference of the grid or jail did not seem to make sense for this play.

That's why, when experimenting with photo compositions, I tried from the beginning to think of ways to explore this element that were not through its concrete presence in the scene, or at least in a more subtle way.

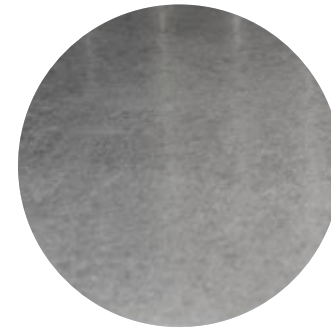
Thus, the use of shadow emerged as a solution, in which the cage exists as an external element, which appears in the space of the scene with a more ephemeral character, without carrying the symbolism of imprisonment that this object brings.



## FIRST TESTS

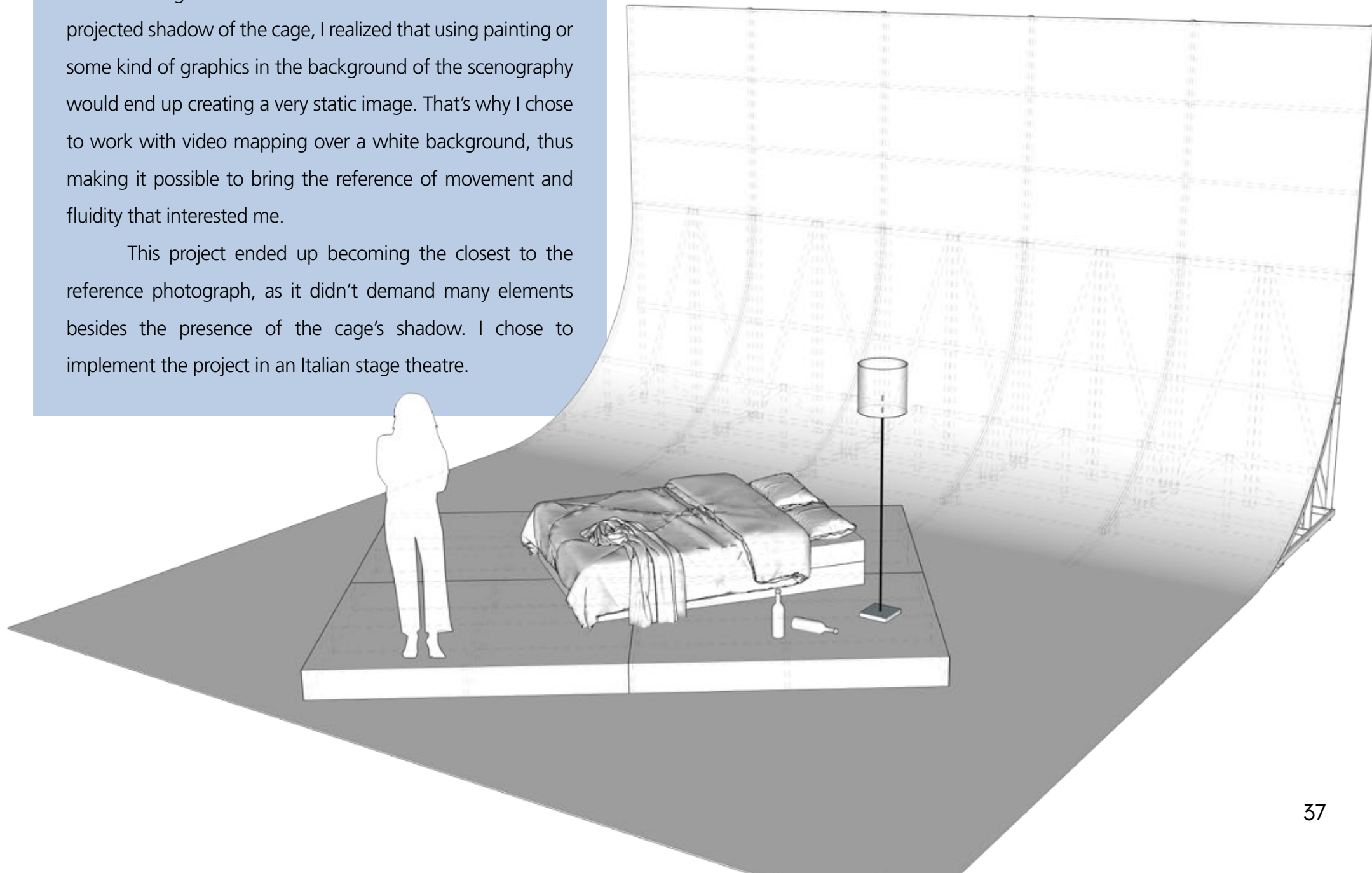


Taking the chosen photograph as a reference, I defined two spaces: From the base of the cage, I created a rectangle with the bed and few elements that would refer to the space of the apartment. Behind and around it, an infinite white background, which would serve as a support for the image of the cage's shadow, creating an opposition between the restricted - and more realistic - space of the apartment and the more abstract and dreamlike outer space.

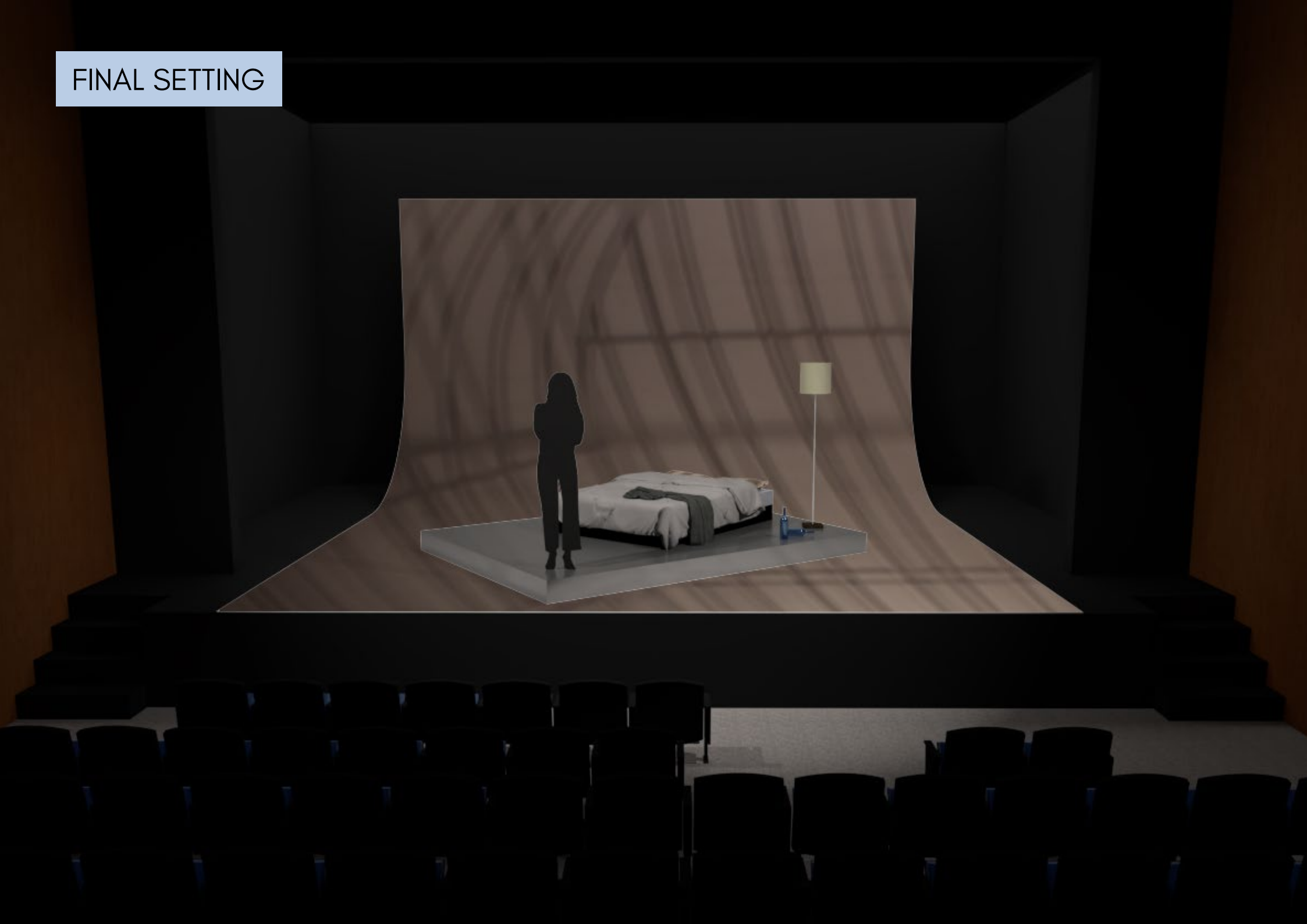


After defining that I would work with the reference of the projected shadow of the cage, I realized that using painting or some kind of graphics in the background of the scenography would end up creating a very static image. That's why I chose to work with video mapping over a white background, thus making it possible to bring the reference of movement and fluidity that interested me.

This project ended up becoming the closest to the reference photograph, as it didn't demand many elements besides the presence of the cage's shadow. I chose to implement the project in an Italian stage theatre.



# FINAL SETTING





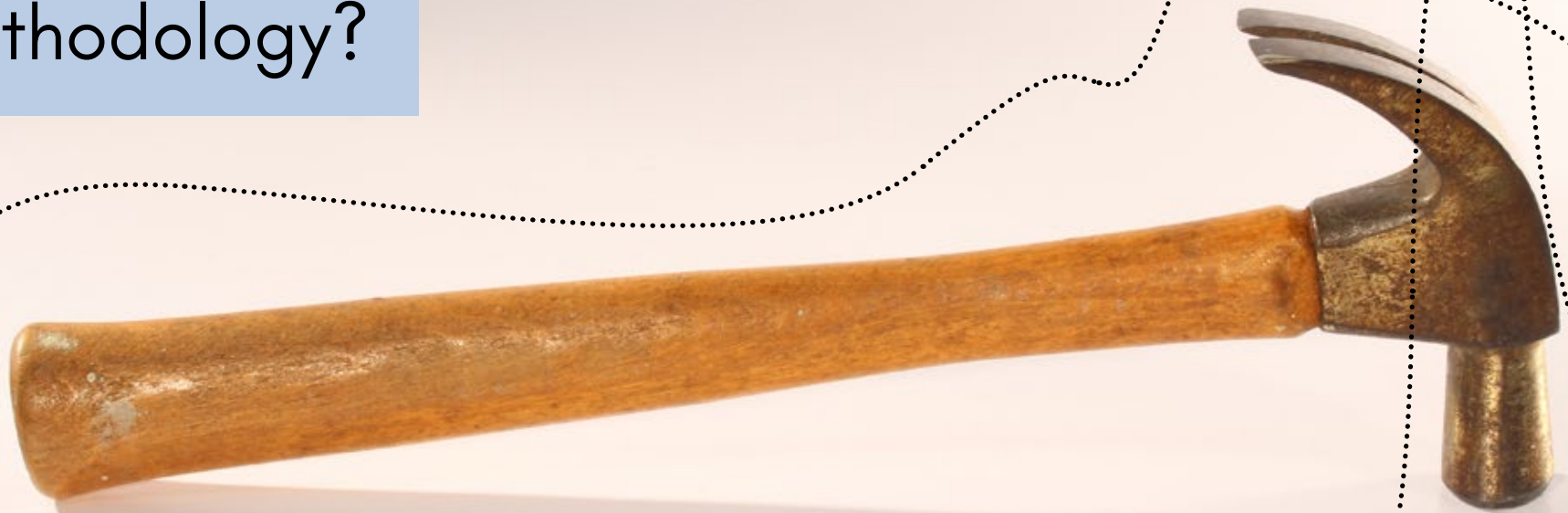


why develop a project

from the object ?

why a

methodology?

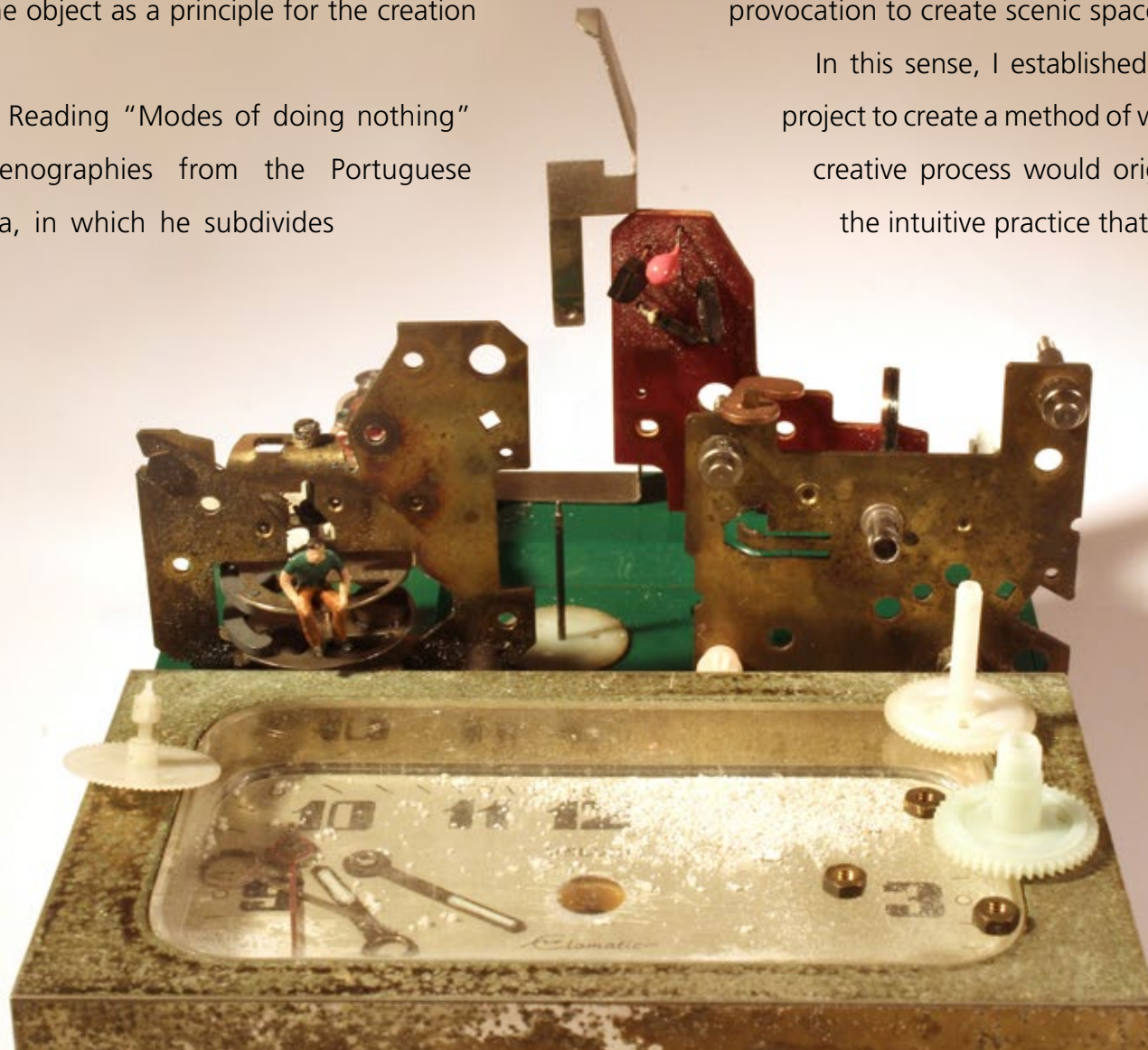


In the process for my final work in university, my desire was to relate the scenographic creation to a research I had done through the previous three years, in which i investigated and analyzed the presence of objects in artworks of many fields - and I wondered if it was possible to use the object as a principle for the creation of spaces.

I was at that time Reading "Modes of doing nothing" a small catalog of scenographies from the Portuguese scenographer José Capela, in which he subdivides

his projects by categories - which cover types of projects and creation processes. So I imagined using the object as a kind of methodology for creating scenographies, working from objects that were present in a dramaturgy and using them as a provocation to create scenic spaces.

In this sense, I established as a provocation for my final project to create a method of work, in which the scenographic creative process would originate from other places than the intuitive practice that is common to us.



I chose the object as a matrix of work because it is a theme that I studied throughout my graduation, besides being an element constantly present in scenographic proposals. Apart from that, it is also a concrete element present in many dramaturgies and could serve as a reference to the theatrical text - at the same time that it can be stretched to the point that, in the final scenographic project, it is not possible to identify its presence.

Initially, I thought that I would use other texts besides Visniec's. However, the direction I chose in the end - to create three different projects for the same text - ended up becoming instigating in another aspect, for being an unprecedented challenge. In general, we invest in an artistic choice to develop a single project and we did not take other ideas forward. In this sense, it was curious and quite difficult to realize three different approaches for the same play.



The categories created by José Capela do not seem to have been established prior to the creation of his works, but rather were attributed to later. However, they seem to define approaches for the scenographic creation, and it is with this idea that I sought to work.

I would like to think about how the object could become itself a space. I wondered how the use of different scales could create new meanings and provocations for the creation of spaces for the scene.

My desire was to propose another starting point for creation, that demonstrates, in a certain way, that creating methodologies is possible, and could also expand our look to other possibilities of creative processes.

Looking at another angle, I could perhaps say that the proposition of a methodology is perhaps the explanation of something we already do unconsciously in our creative processes, but for which, in general, we do not pay attention. What I have proposed to accomplish is the possibility of inventing a creative process, showing that it is also a creation.



I really like a saying by the Brazilian artist Tunga, that in an interview for Trip Magazine states that:

“A sculptor takes a piece of stone, takes a quantity. The remaining part is the sculpture. When you dissolve the soap with your hands you are doing the same process. Your look on the soap has to change. If it becomes the repository of a thought, of your intentionality, that is a sculpture”.<sup>1</sup>

I like this idea of a second look, because by looking again at an object you can provoke the eruption of a second identity, evoking also other possibilities not yet revealed. It was from this principle that I asked myself: why couldn't objects also be starting points for the creation of scenographic spaces?



1. TUNGA. Trip Magazine, 2010.

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