



empathy by design

Thesis Project by- Sneha Gupta

empathy for other

Empathy provides an individual with the ability to truly connect, see, feel, imagine, and understand the experiences of others while setting aside their own biases, perspectives, ideas, and experiences.

Choosing empathy means being willing to pause, reflect, and place yourself in others' situations—even when it's challenging.

empathy for self





*How can design be harnessed as a means to
foster empathy?*



Emotional/Psychological

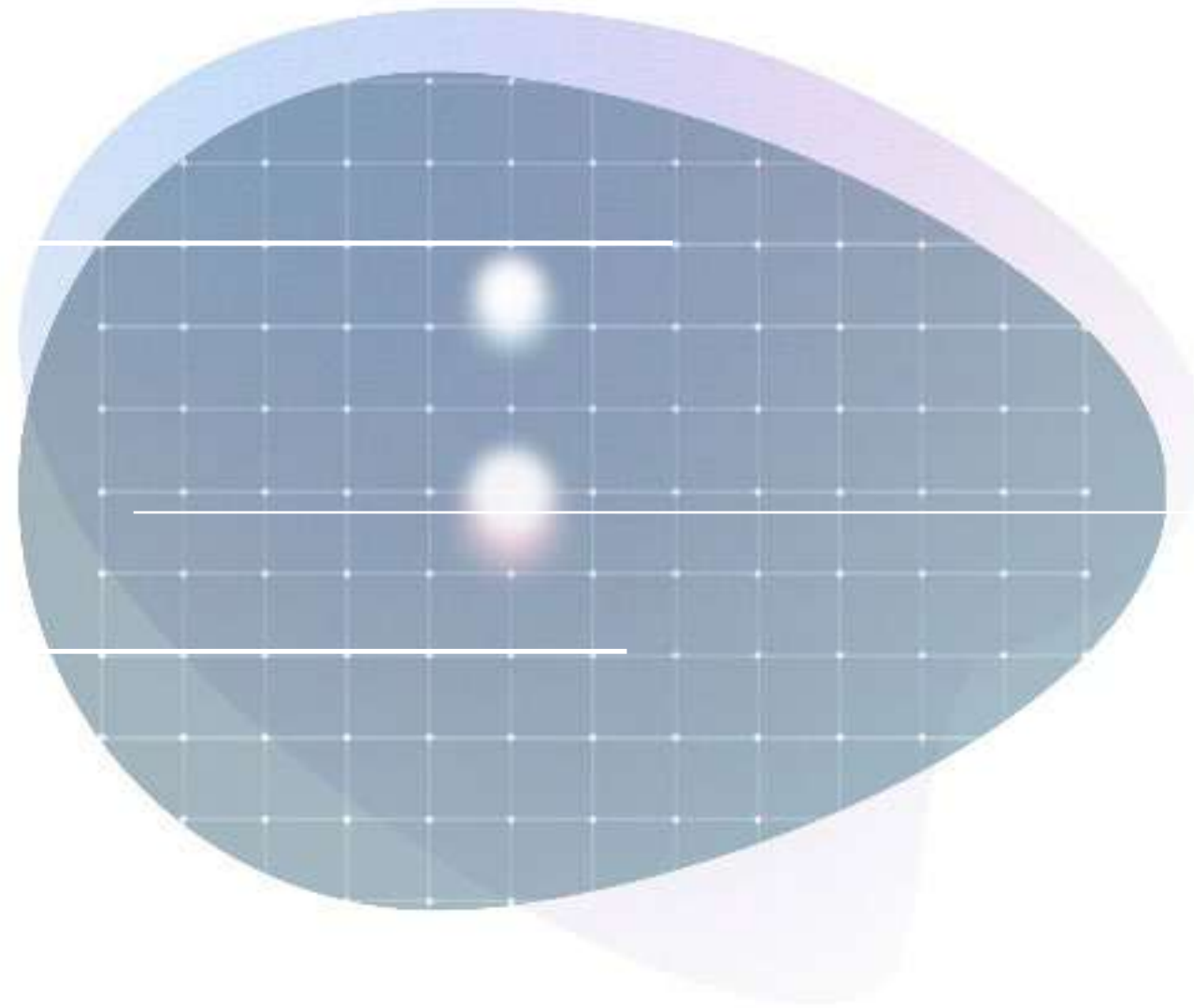


● Infrastructure ● Technology ● Psychology ● Amenities ● Systems ● Socio-Cultural ● Clinical

design experiences

Responsive Experiences

Immersive Experiences



Shared Experiences



moments of choice



moments of being seen/heard



moments of refuge

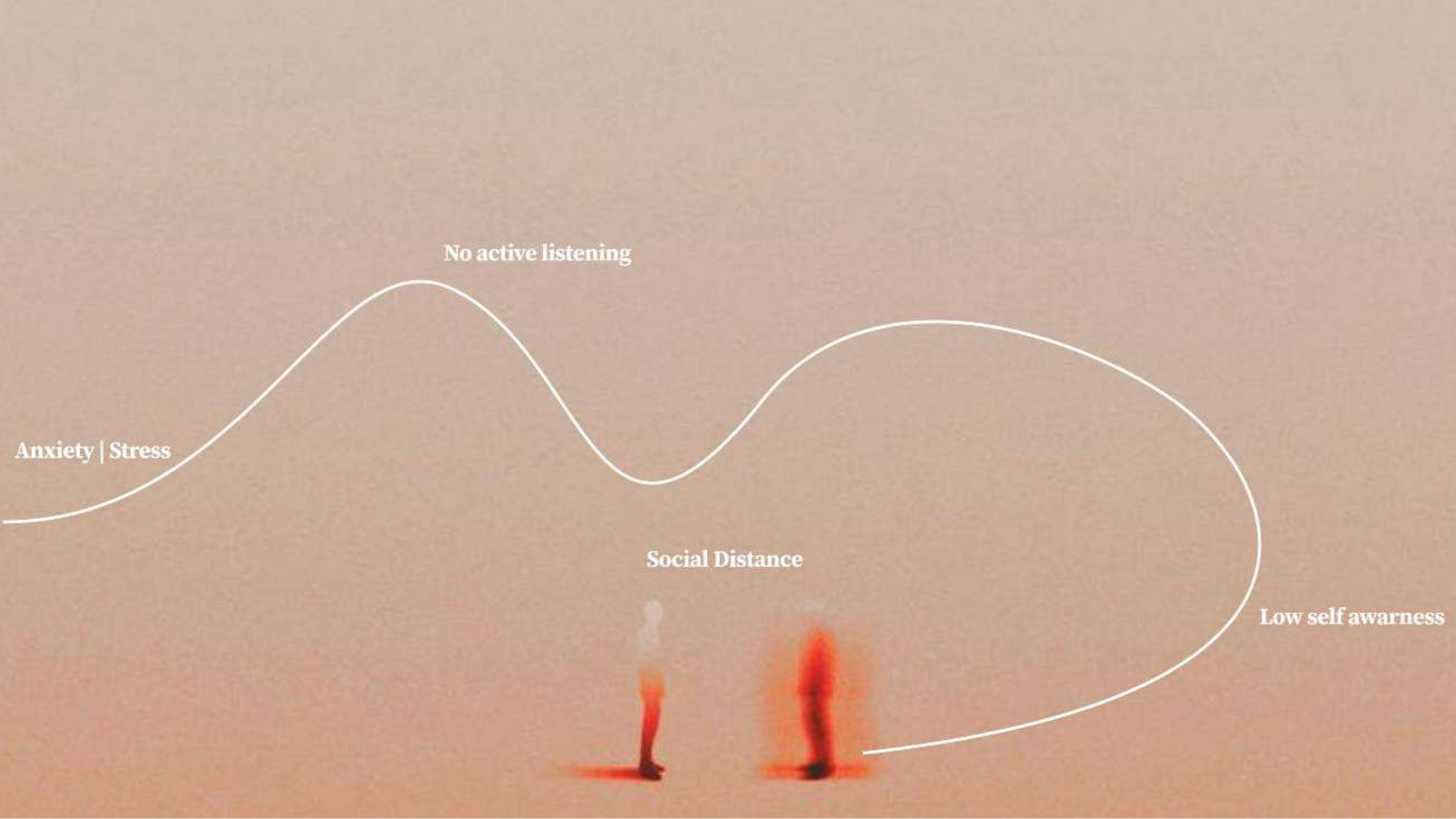
*Can waiting spaces be more than just a place
to wait?*





Massachusetts General Hospital | Lunder Building





design strategies



Shared Presence



Immersive Dialogue



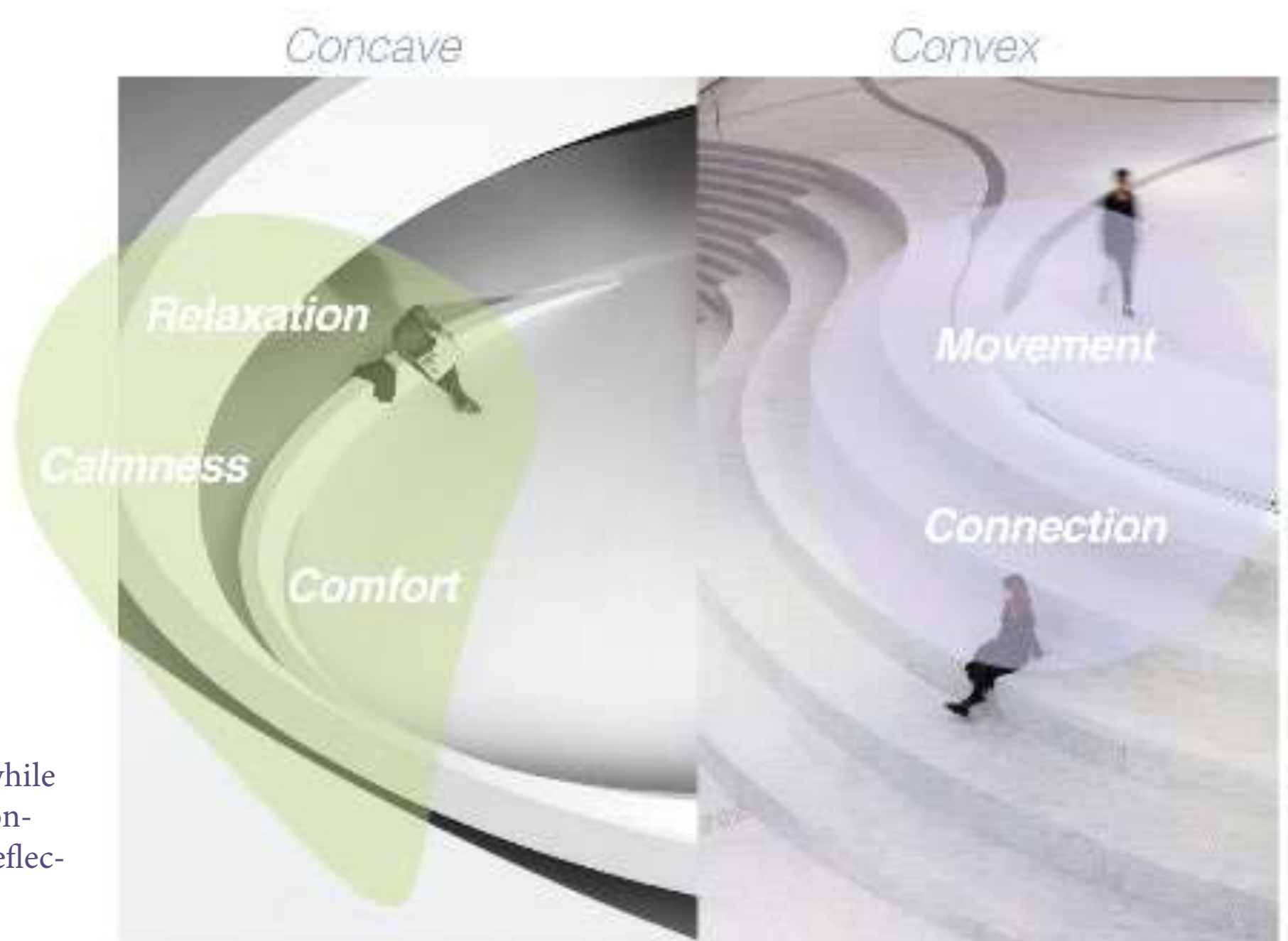
Self Resonance



Expanded Lens

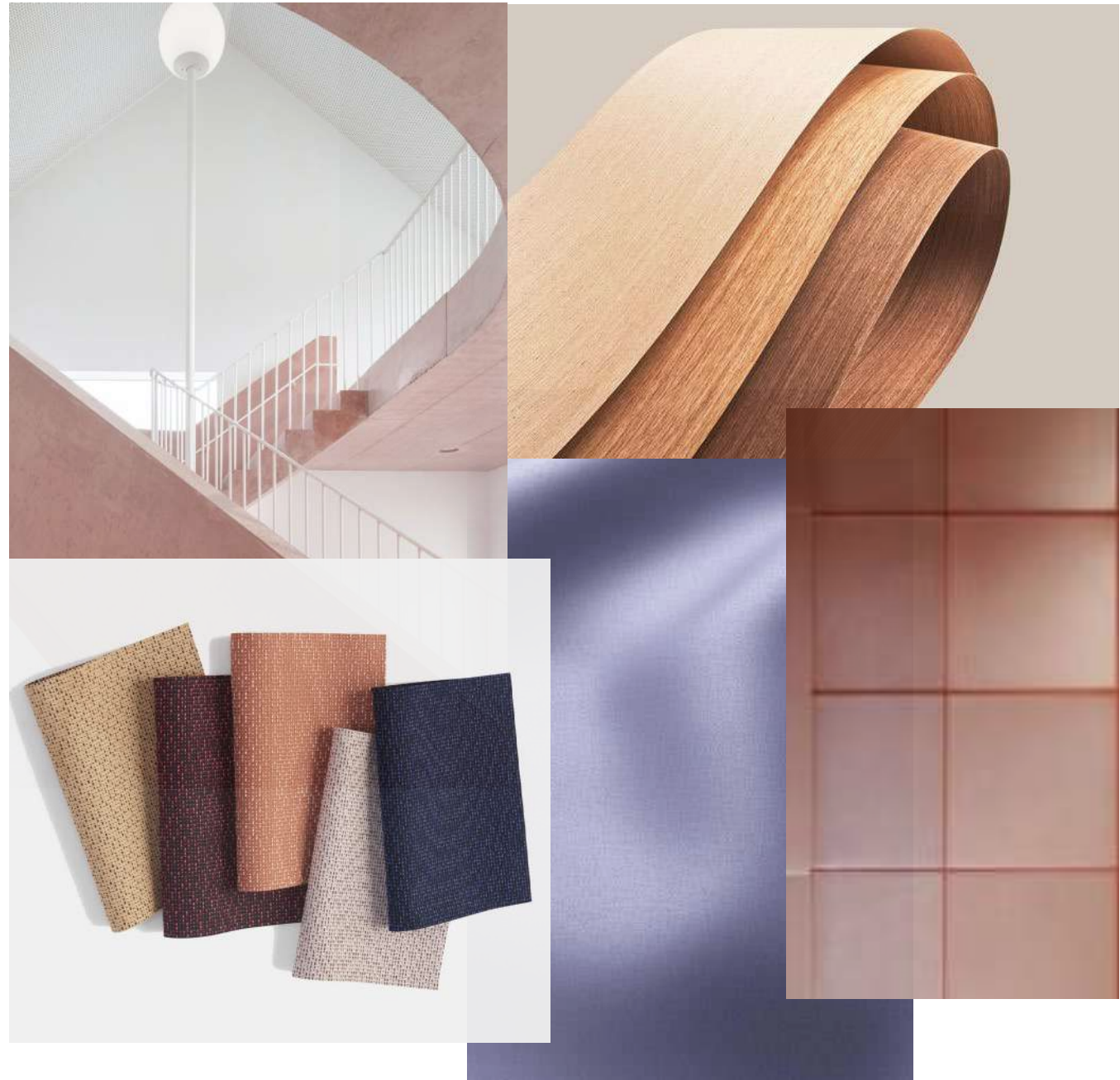
*engaging and
intimate*

Concave shapes create comfort and relaxation, while convex forms encourage movement, flow, and connection. This harmonious balance fosters both reflection & interaction.



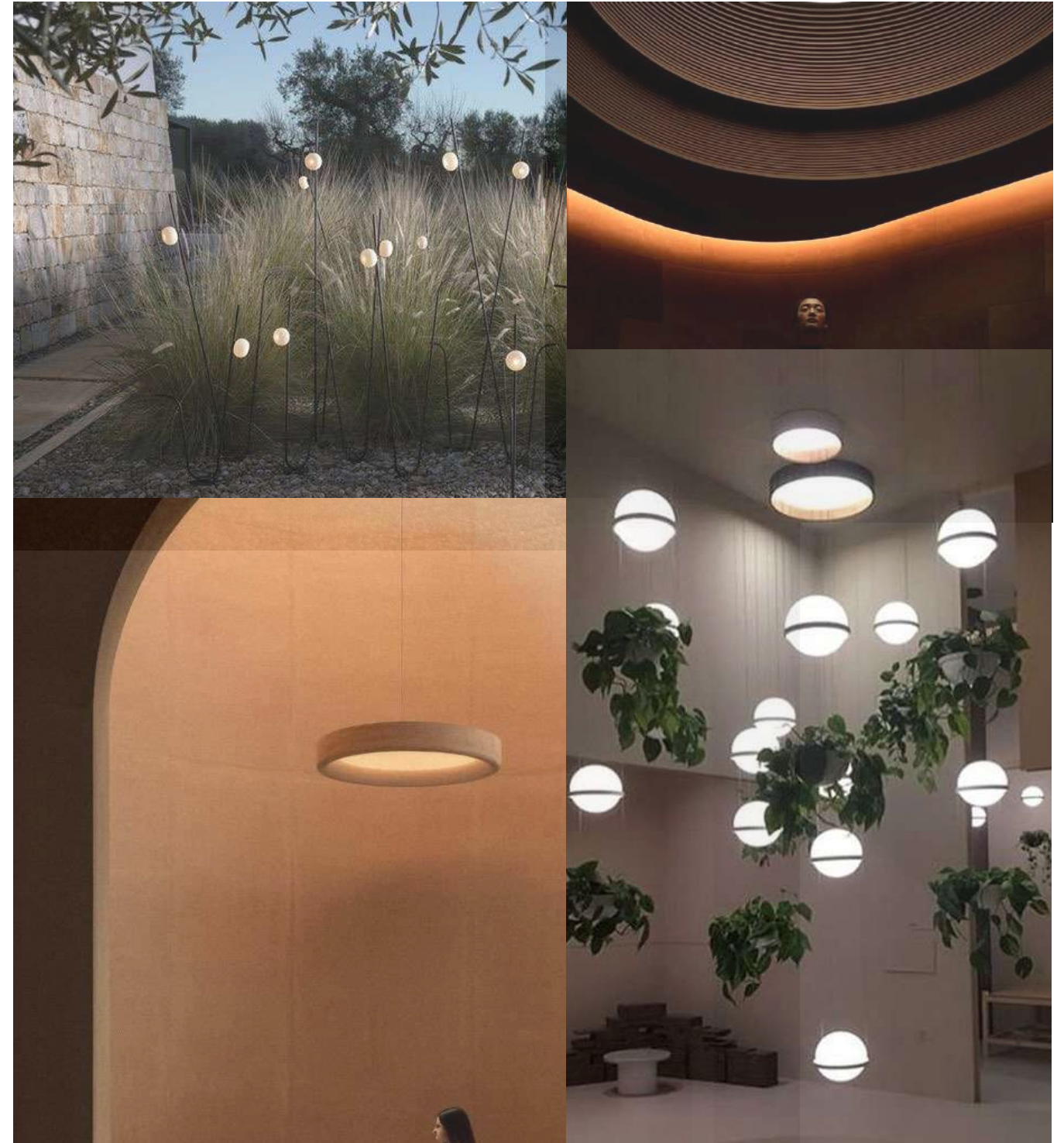
grounding and comforting

Materials that heighten awareness through texture and reflection, paired with warm, soft elements for ease. Pops of color add vibrancy, joy, and hope, transforming the atrium into a restorative and empathetic space.



Inviting and soothing

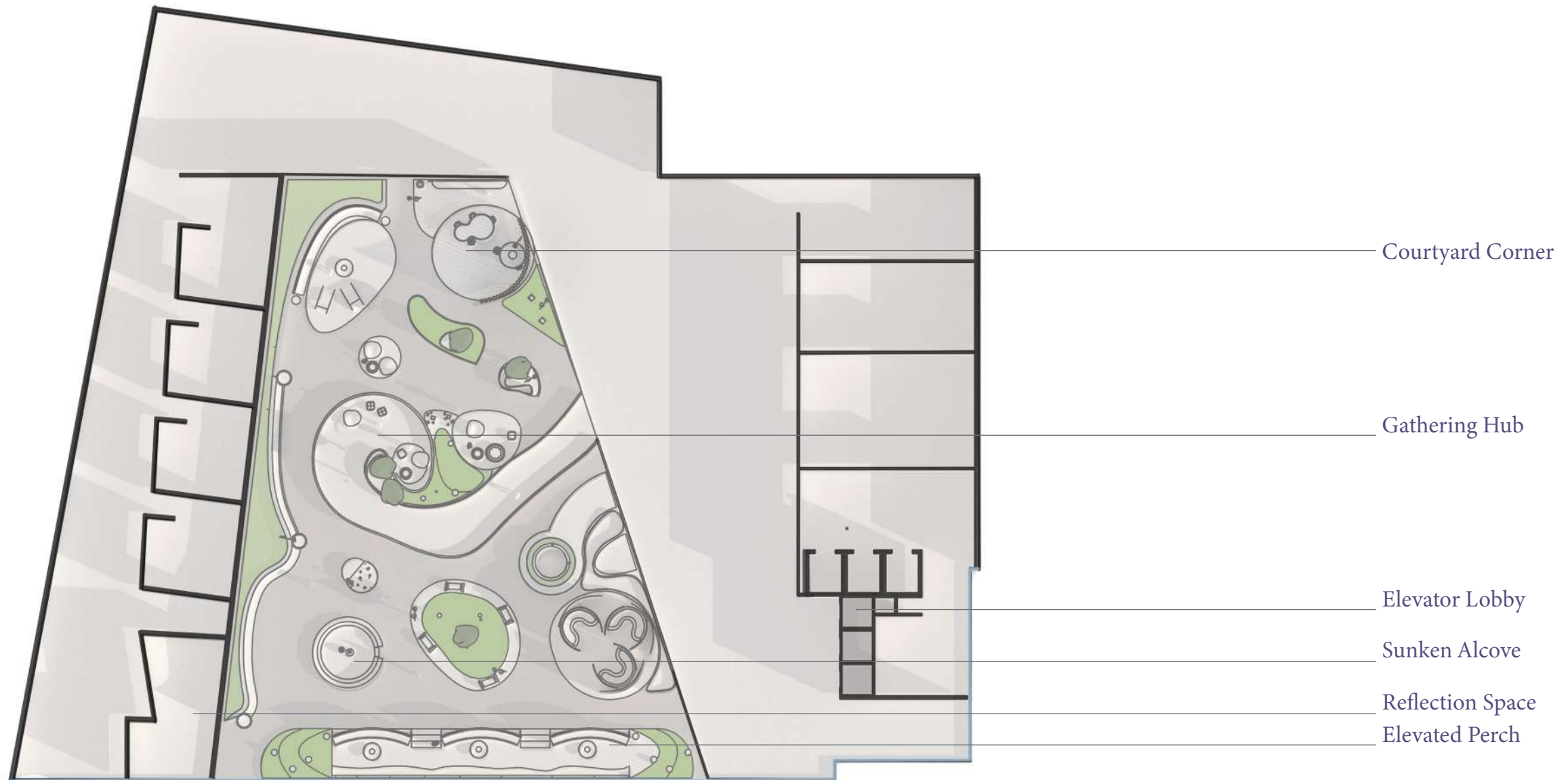
Materials that heighten awareness through texture and reflection, paired with warm, soft elements for ease. Pops of color add vibrancy, joy, and hope, transforming the atrium into a restorative and empathetic space.





Shared Experiences

Atrium Space
Empathy for other

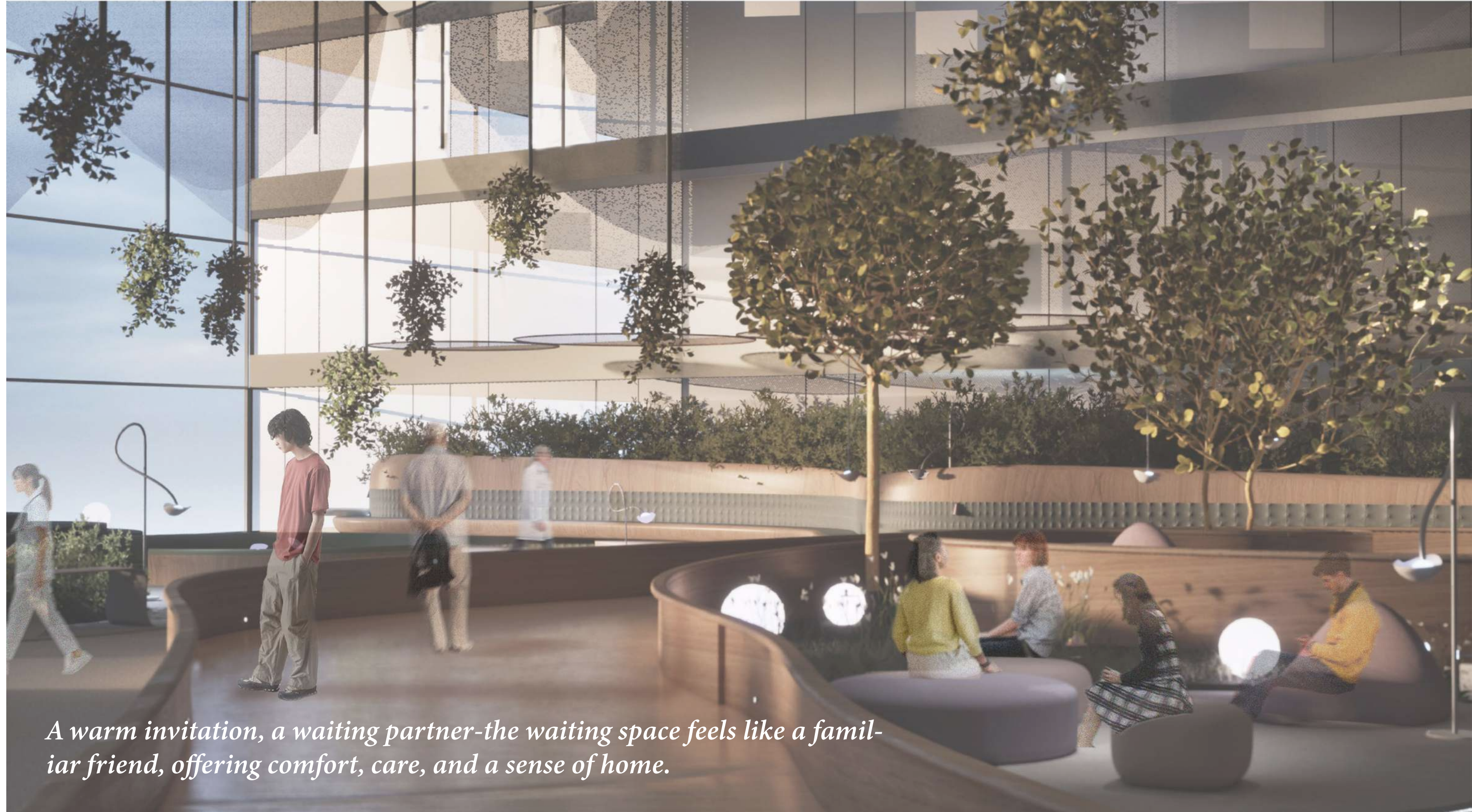




Atrium Space

Patient Rooms

Atrium Space



A warm invitation, a waiting partner-the waiting space feels like a familiar friend, offering comfort, care, and a sense of home.



Talking Circles—where voices are heard, stories are shared, and a sense of community takes shape through empathy and connection.

In progress

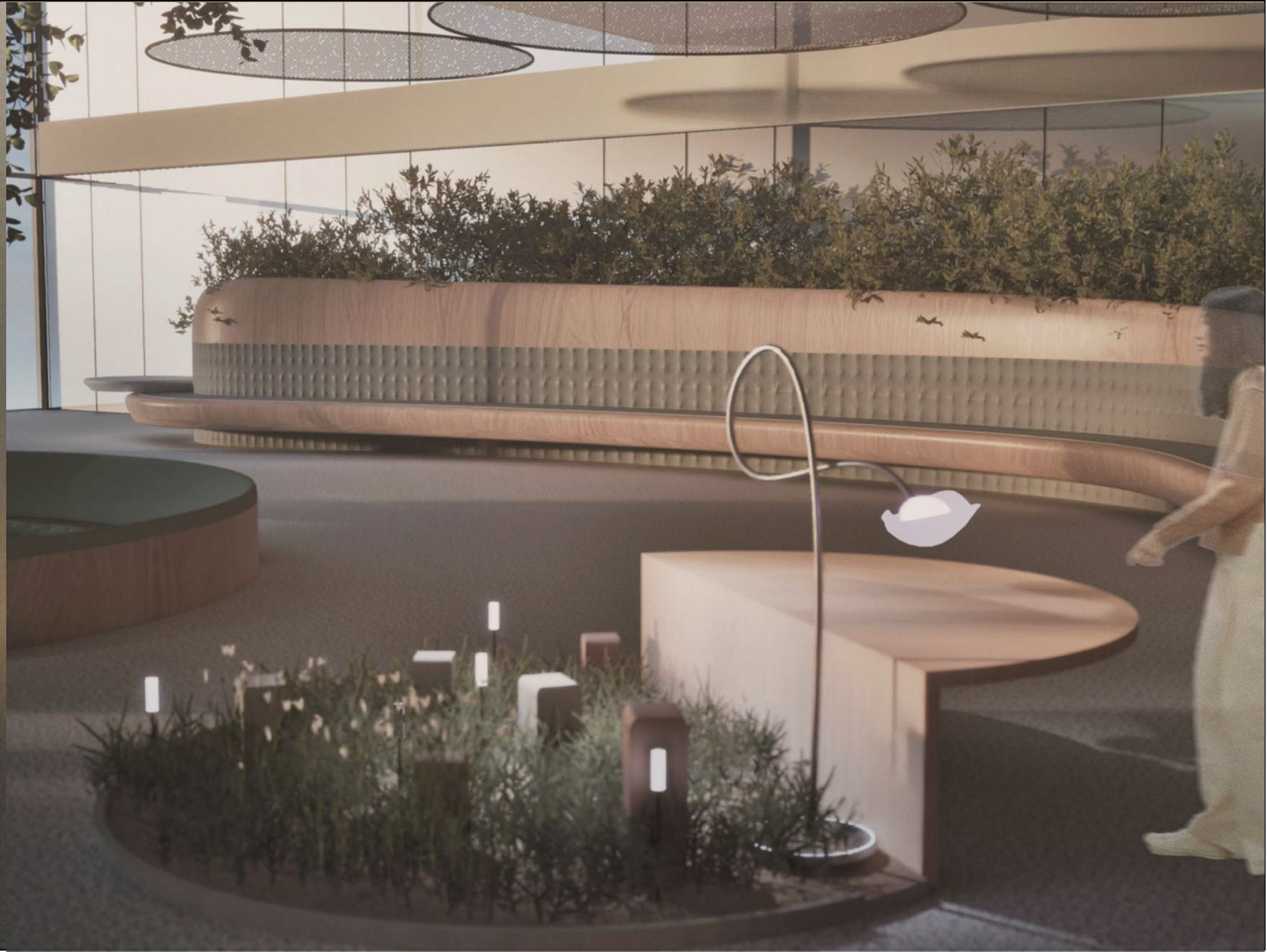
A modern interior space, possibly a lobby or atrium, featuring a large, leafy tree in the center. A curved, illuminated lamp stands to the left of the tree. Several people are walking through the space, including a man in a dark jacket in the foreground and a man in a blue shirt in the background. The space is characterized by large, curved concrete pillars and a glass wall in the background. The lighting is soft and ambient, with some light coming from the floor and others from the lamp and the background wall.

A quiet pause, a gentle distractions-pulls you into the present moment as you move through the space.

In progress

Echo Circles-

An installation that calls
for intimacy and moment
of being heard





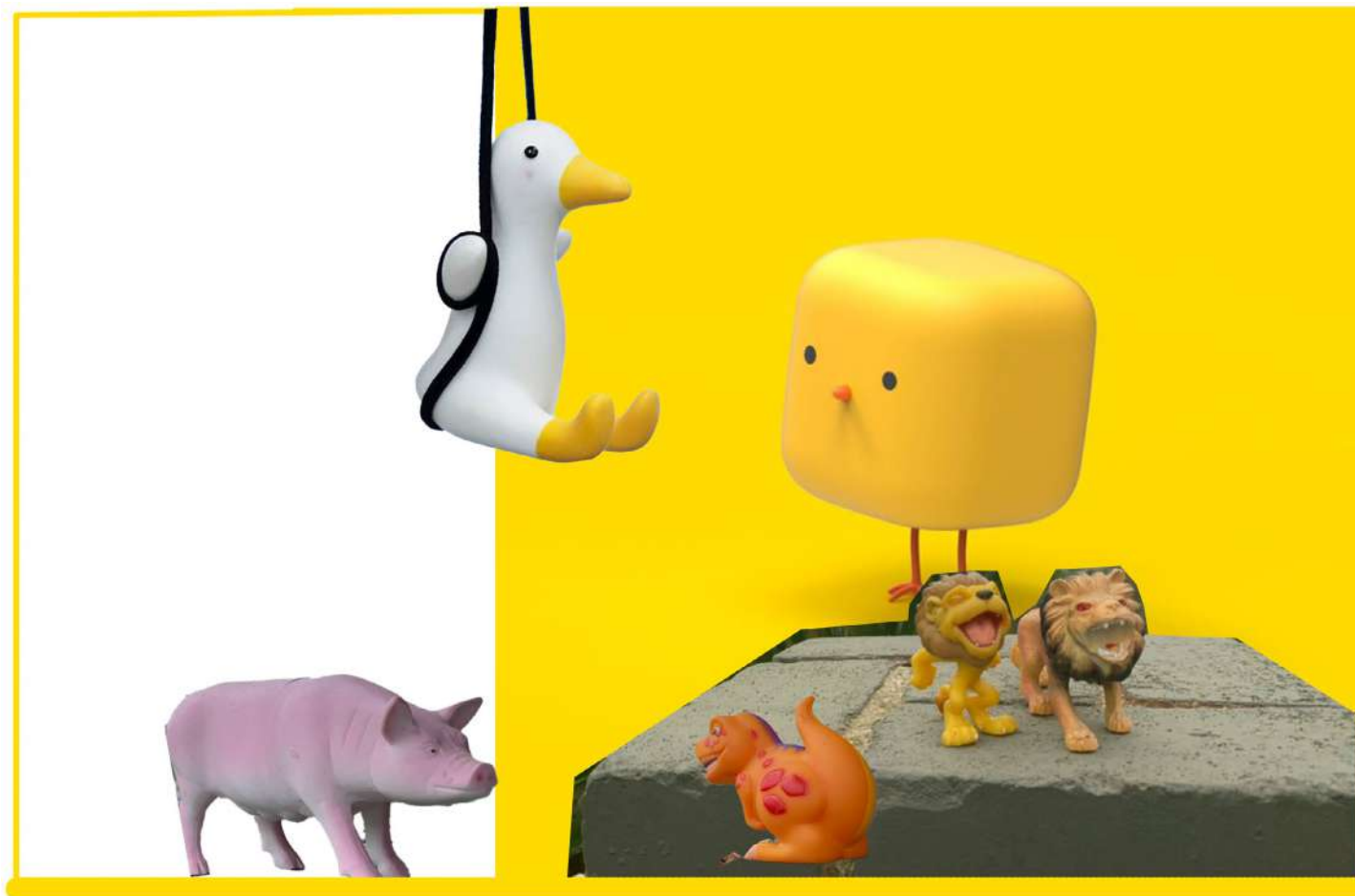
Echo Circle- Interactive Installation

An installation that captures and preserves the unseen stories and journeys of individuals—where physical touch serves as a bridge, sparking connection and revealing their interconnectedness.





Layered experiences unfold through gentle pauses—inviting moments of reflection, comfort, and connection along the journey.



Moment of joy

Scattered throughout the space are moments of joy—playful surprises that spark curiosity, evoke smiles, and offer a gentle pause, subtly shifting the mood and lightening each step.





A space designed to shift perspectives—inviting new ways of seeing, feeling and understanding through subtle spatial layers.

In progress

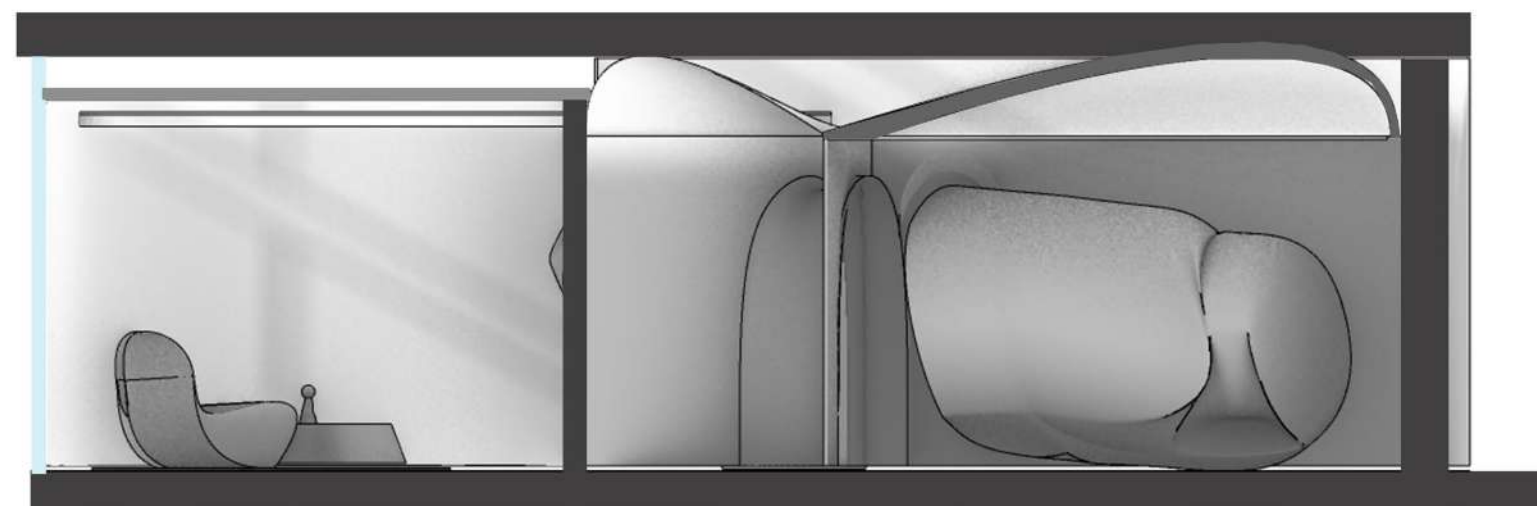
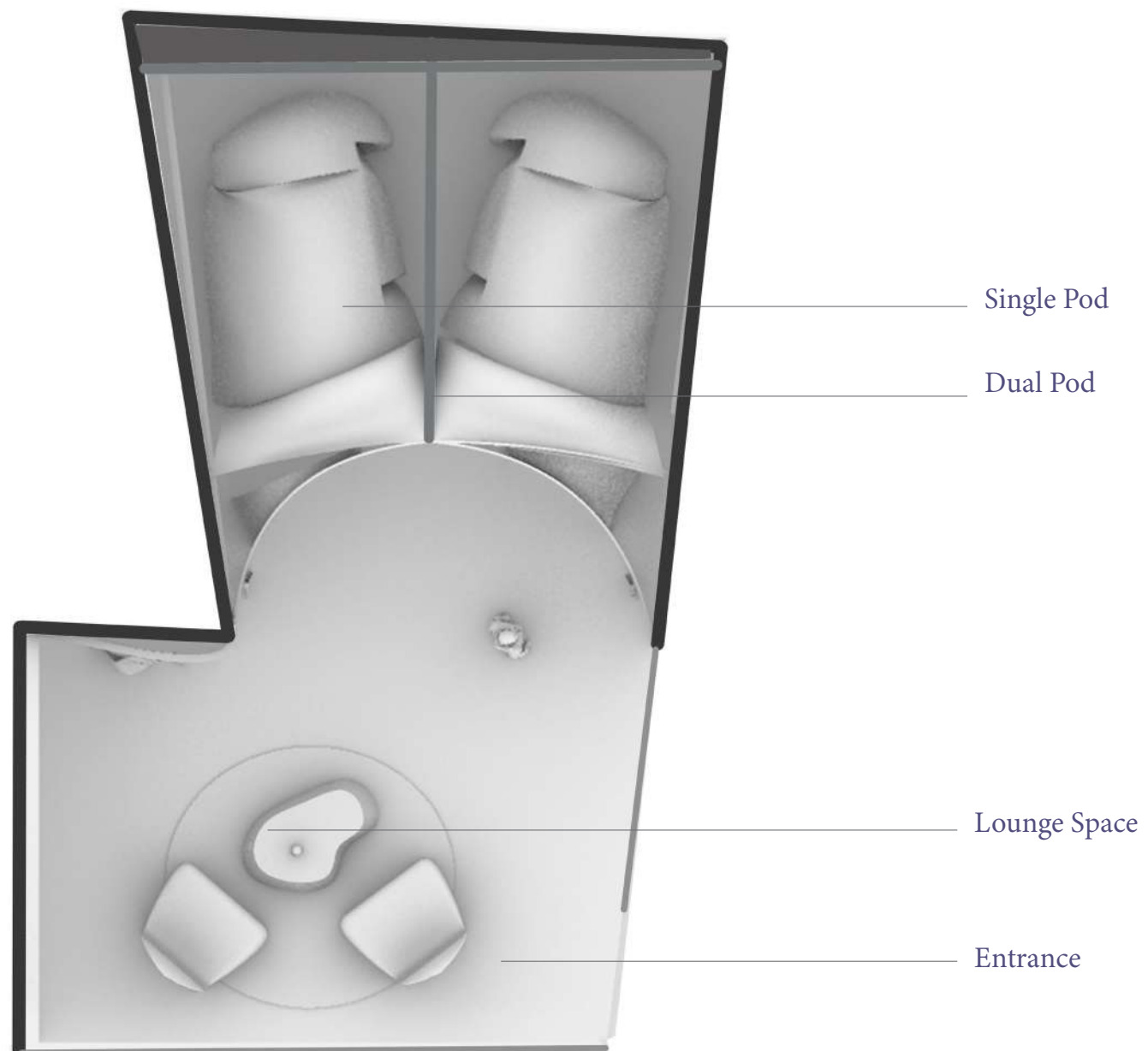


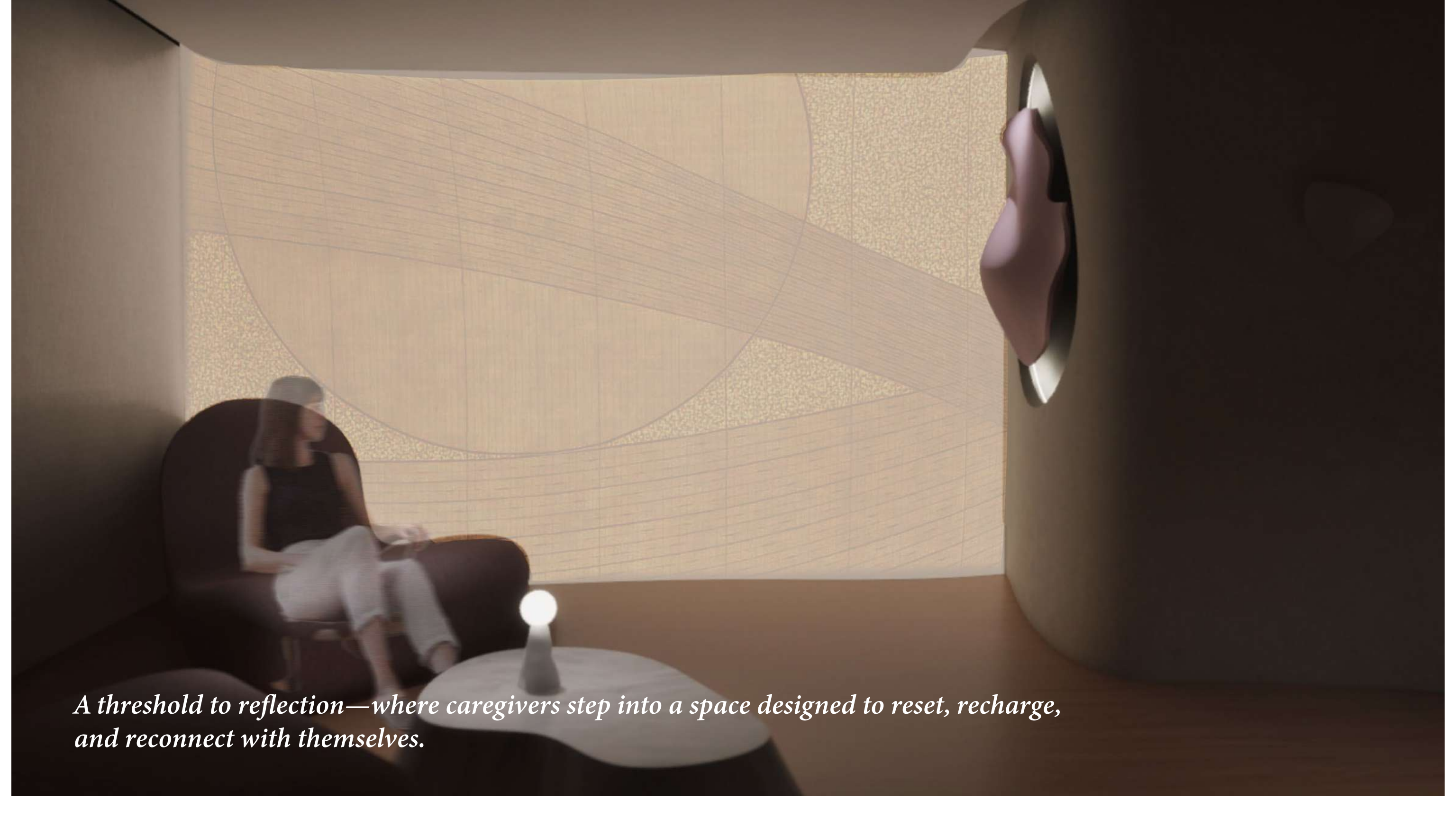
A quiet retreat, bathed in sunlight with a glimpse of the world beyond.



Responsive Experience

Reflection Space
Self Empathy



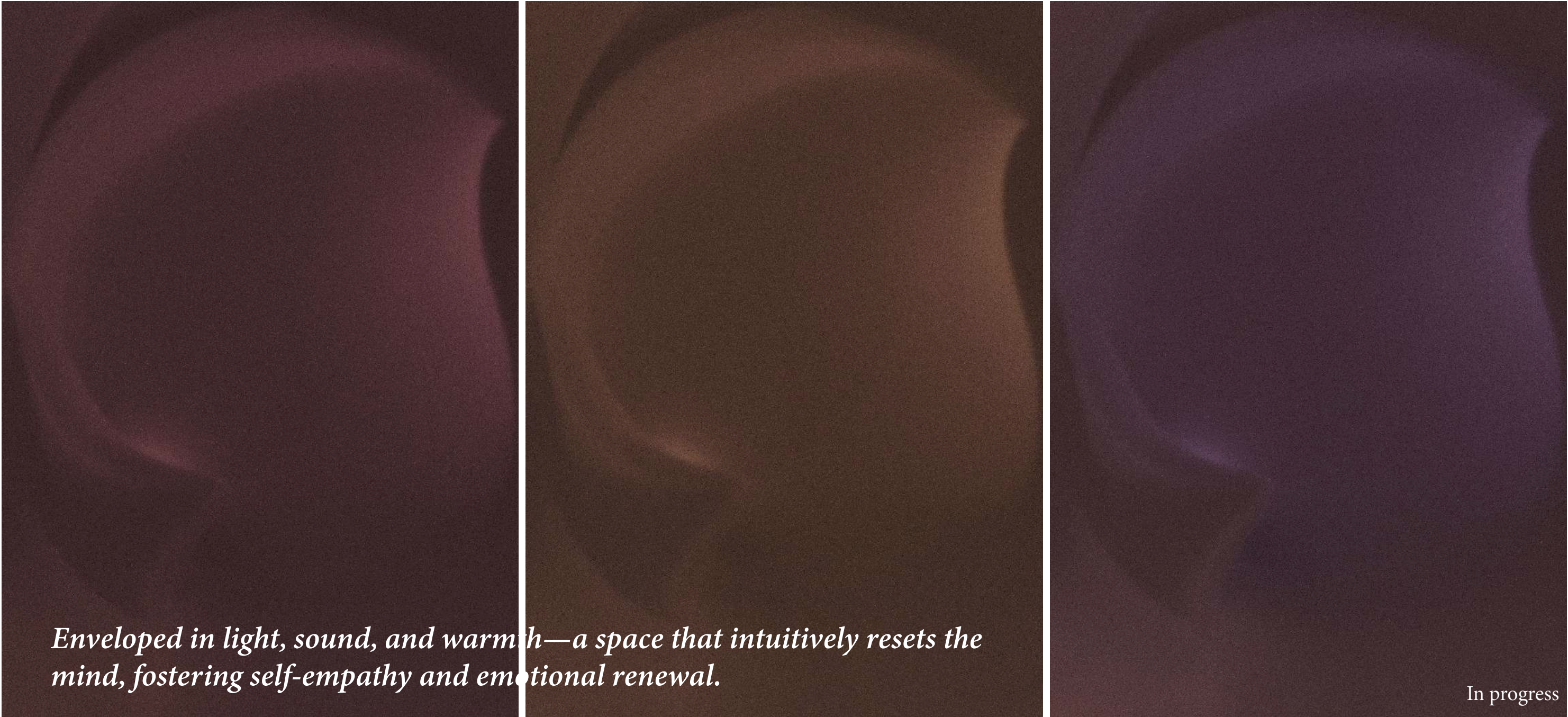
A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black sleeveless top and light-colored trousers, is seated in a dark, curved, modern chair. She is looking down at a small object in her hands. The room is dimly lit, with a large, curved wall in the background featuring a grid pattern of thin, glowing lines. A small, glowing, cone-shaped light fixture sits on a low, curved table in the foreground. To the right, a large, curved wall is visible, with a glowing, abstract, organic-shaped light fixture mounted on it. The overall atmosphere is contemplative and serene.

A threshold to reflection—where caregivers step into a space designed to reset, recharge, and reconnect with themselves.



A gentle glow beckons—layers of light and mist signal a moment of pause, guiding you toward stillness and self-awareness

In progress



Enveloped in light, sound, and warmth—a space that intuitively resets the mind, fostering self-empathy and emotional renewal.

In progress



Responsive Experience

VR Experience
Empathy for other



Patient User

Hand Shivers/trembles as the patient tries to hold the caregivers hand. (Haptic vibration through gloves) temperature changes

Difficulty getting up on their own, a heavy pull

Slight blurriness in the vision as they move from the room to the corridor space. (fuzzy, frosted, glitches in view)



Caregiver User

*Caregiver nervous to talk to the patient.
(lag in speech)*

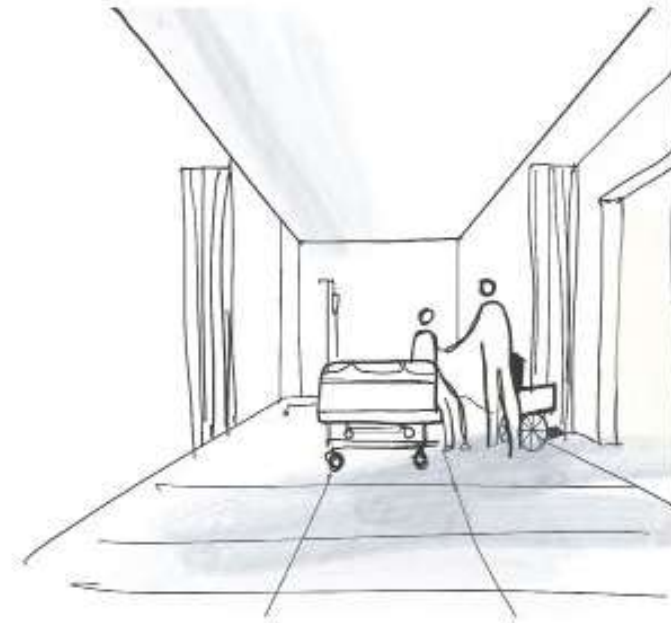
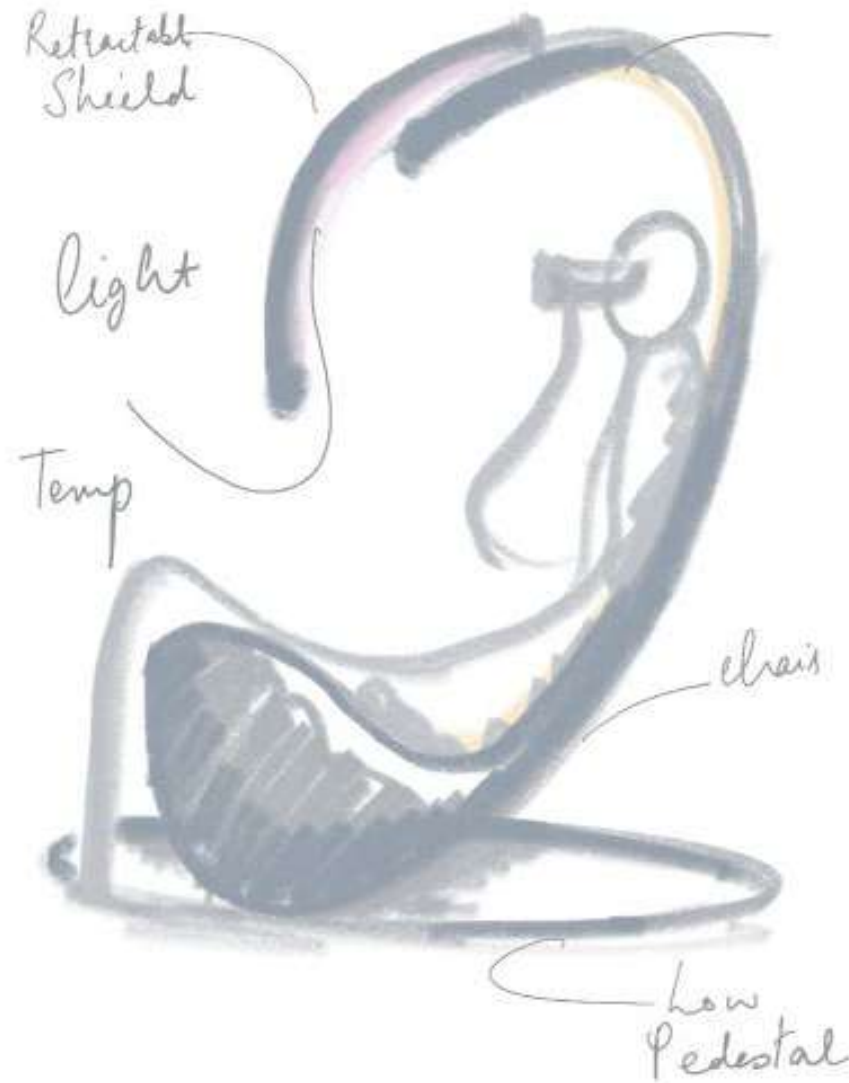
Overstressed by work, thinking about other stuff. (temperature changes, a lot of noises)

Physical fatigue - Slow movement, temperature changes



Reflection Space

A Virtual Reality experience part of the hospital training for the professionals



The user takes upon the role of a stroke recovery patient and caregiver in a cold sterile hospital room.



The caregiver helps the patient to move from the bed to the wheelchair while the patient struggles to move.

Patient User

1. Hand Shivers/trembles as the patient tries to hold the caregivers hand. (Haptic vibration through gloves) temperature changes
2. Difficulty getting up on their own, a heavy pull
3. Slight blurriness in the vision as they move from the room to the corridor space. (fuzzy, frosted, glitches in view)

Caregiver User

1. Caregiver nervous to talk to the patient. (conversation gets disjointed)
2. Overstressed by work, thinking about other stuff. (temperature changes, a lot of noises)
3. Physically tired, slow and lag in movement



Next they take a stroll across the landscaped corridor in the hospital.

A photograph of a person's hands reaching out towards a field of hay bales. The hands are in the foreground, slightly out of focus, with fingers spread. The background shows a green field with several round hay bales scattered across it. In the distance, there is a dense forested hill under a clear sky. The overall tone is warm and hopeful.

Project Impact

Fostering Empathy

Efficient and faster patient recovery

Enhancing quality of care

Building a community

Transforming healthcare environments

Encouraging emotional well being



In every interaction, there's an unspoken story. What would happen if we listened more closely ?