

COMPLEX PROJECTS

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# THE OTHER ART MUSEUM

INNOVATION, PROCESS AND ART

P4.0 REFLECTION KJESTYN YEE SHUK MYNN

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complex projects

2024

**COMPLEX PROJECTS**  
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**OTHER IS PROCESS**



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Museums have traditionally exhibited finished pieces. However, this practice can limit the public's comprehension of the creative process and the work that goes into making art. In response, the Other Art Museum breaks the mould. It adds public studios and exhibitions of testing/creative processes to their programme, providing visitors with a behind-the-scenes look at how art is made and exhibiting the final pieces. Furthermore, the museum will host an Artists in Residence program, providing a home for artists to live, develop, and exhibit their work. The arrangement will allow visitors to engage personally with artists in a living workshop setting and interact with the creative process over time.

## BUILDING ON EDUCATIONAL AND INTERACTIVE GOALS

It can be challenging for the general public to fully grasp the process and effort that goes into creating art when they only see the finished product. By integrating exhibitions focusing on the creative process and hosting Artists in Residence, museums can enhance their educational programme and reinforce their role as crucial spaces for cultural discourse and innovation. By unveiling the creative process, museums can offer visitors a deep dive into the methodologies, research, iterations, and decisions that shape final works. This approach can also make museums more engaging and interactive, attracting a more comprehensive range of visitors and providing a more enriching experience for everyone who attends (Bermudez, "Are the Walls of Museums Coming down to Make Them Authentic and Relevant in a New Era?"). By expanding their offerings, museums can foster a deeper appreciation for art, the creative process, and cultural and heritage preservation, contributing significantly to society.

As part of the Complex Projects Graduation Studio: Bodies, Building and Berlin, and part of the Material group, the architecture of the Other Art Museum is not just about aesthetics but sustainability. It is based on selecting sustainable materials and prioritising lowering

the museum's carbon footprint. This aligns with the global goal of reducing carbon emissions by 2050. The group formed this goal as buildings are accountable for 39% of the global energy-related carbon emissions: 28% from operational emissions and 11% from material production and construction (World Green Building Council, 2019).

William Morris mentioned in 1891 that 'materials' are "the foundation of architecture, and perhaps one would not go very wrong if one defined architecture as the art of building suitably with suitable material." Within the museum context, materials play the role of the narrator, informing the change of theme in a space, providing texture, colour and contrast.

In summary, the project aims to narrate the artistic process using the museum as a

*'In what way can a building enhance a spatial experience or organisation?'*

*'How does spatial design enhance the experience of viewing art in a museum?'*

medium and routing the museum is the focus. Hence, it is appropriate to ask:

The Other Art Museum is a platform where people are welcomed into the world of artist process and innovation, a unique initiative that goes beyond the final pieces. The project, supported by Deutscher Bundestag Ausschuss für Kultur und Medien (Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs) and Enter Art Foundation (E.A.F.), is located in Europa City, Berlin, a residential and commercial district which will benefit from a cultural programme. The project's main objective is to provide a space for the public to engage with the artistic process and innovation, promoting a greater appreciation for art and cultural and heritage preservation, thereby significantly impacting society.



Fig 01. Photo of child and guardian interacting with installation in Pergamon Museum taken in 2023. (Own photograph)



Fig 02. Examples of the art produced by students in art classes Ms. Nisenbaum taught as part of her residency (Masuike 2023)

# REFLECTION

## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to reflect on the Other Art Museum's design process in relation to the research question, the Complex Projects Graduation Studio: Bodies, Buildings and Berlin, and the project's social relevance.

### 01 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH & DESIGN

The connection between research and design is integral. Thorough research is the key to creating a successful museum program and design.

Initially, determining the meaning of "Other" in relation to the project proved to be a challenge. Despite its everyday use as an adjective meaning alternative or distinct, these definitions did not align with the project's goals. The idea of narrating the creative process emerged through extensive research of art museums and their themes and identifying gaps in their storytelling.

The research began with carefully studying how museums are organised and documented through visits to five museums. This understanding identified routing as a central concept for narrating the artistic process. The architectural design could produce various effects by utilising vertical and horizontal routing modes. Further research was conducted on routing-based museums to develop a cohesive solution.

Additional investigations revealed that materiality, texture, colour, and contrast effectively engage and guide visitors through the museum experience. Building upon these discoveries, a routing core was incorporated into the design to enhance the spatial experience for visitors. A courtyard was also included as a feature and checkpoint to aid visitor navigation.

Research also demonstrated that museums with permanent collections are often organised into rooms to convey a narrative or a timeline. On the other hand, contemporary museums embody wide-open, flexible spaces

that are customisable to their running themes. The culmination of the research is that this project utilised a vertical organisation to illustrate the ascent of practising art, the innovation behind the scenes, and the feature of open rooms to accommodate the changing environment of art media.

The topic of Artists in Residence has sparked inquiries about housing and work arrangements. According to Hanc (2023) and Woolbright (2022), museums that cater to the needs of artists can produce superior-quality, unrushed artwork. As a result, this project has developed private studios and residences to alleviate any temporal concerns and help artists focus on their craft.

Due to the diverse utilisation of the Other Art Museum, the design brief has resulted in a separation of programs categorised as either Work or Relax. Public and Private studios and back-of-house facilities are classified under the Work category, whereas Residences, libraries and courtyards are grouped under the Relax category.

### 02 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRADUATION TOPIC AND STUDIO TOPIC

The Complex Projects Graduation Studio is a proposed network of projects organised under four themes: Material, Energy, Digitalisation, and Health. It is a collaborative practice that covers urban and architectural investigations into Berlin. The studio consisted of nine typologies sorted into each theme, creating, for example, four museums with a different focus.

The Other Art Museum first fell into the theme of Material, providing a wide fabric to explore. Before defining what 'Other' meant to this project, materials only meant responding to the context and being mindful of material usage based on the practice of sustainability. However, more was needed to provide specificity when designing the project, which led to using materials as a guide to narrate the creative process of art.

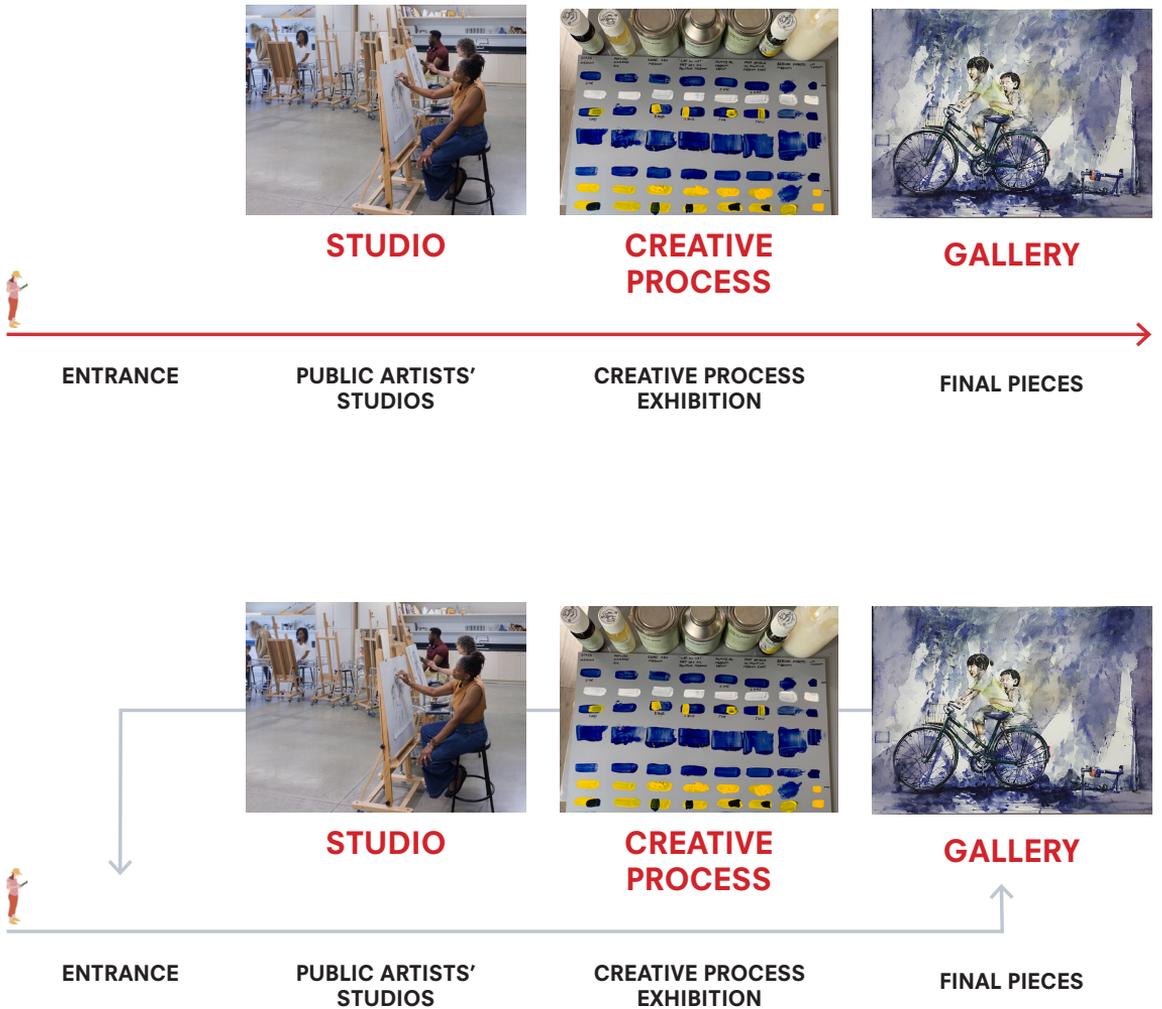


Fig 03. Narration and arrangement of The Other Art Museum spaces.

The relationship between the Material Group and Berlin was laid out as such: material sources should be local to Germany to reduce embodied and transport emissions, project locations should be one-kilometre reach of existing waterways or railways, 33% of all building materials need to be sourced from locally available building waste sources, and located in a prominent location to assert a statement within society.

This meant that the project had the opportunity to benefit from its proximity to a railway, decreasing the need for car parking, which aligns with Berlin's motion to reduce car usage.

With this line of thought, choosing a site was based on research of prominence where a visible address and good transportation links, including proximity to prominent roads, public transportation, and airports, make it convenient for local and out-of-town visitors, a context where creative activities will benefit (e.g., residential, commercial), providing artists with opportunities to share their experience, and an area with low museum density (A context lacking a cultural programme). These topics are considered because the art market and social media are oversaturated, leading to exposure and recognition challenges ('What Are The Biggest Challenges Faced By Artists Today?', n.d.). These considerations led to the placement of the Project in EuropaCity, a residential-commercial-HORECA development close to the Hauptbahnhof that lacks a cultural programme.

Upon conducting additional research, it has been discovered that the aforementioned site has a rich history as a hub for connectivity. It served as a bustling port and was home to Lehrter station during the industrialisation era prior to the construction of the Berlin Wall. Furthermore, the site was a gateway between the East and West. In this case, the project will serve as a cultural connection between EuropaCity and Berlin.

### **03 RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH CHOSEN IN RELATION TO THE GRADUATION STUDIO**

Reflecting on the research methodology in relation to the Graduation Studio The Complex Projects Graduation Studio provided a weekly timetable for researching and producing results. An extensive design process gained a comprehensive understanding of Berlin, which involved analysing the program brief and developing detailed plans, sections, elevations, and all design elements. However, during the research phase, the author deviated from the proposed timetable as the project developed nonlinearly. The author sought to understand how the project could contribute to the already expansive art representation in the European City of Culture.

At the outset of building the design brief, the author had yet to have prior visits or impressions of Berlin. As the research phase began, the author mapped out 175 museums and galleries and researched their themes. The author initially conceived of a sensory museum where the art pieces could be physically touched. Location-wise, the current site was already listed as a potential selection due to its proximity to the Hauptbahnhof, especially since the Material Group was in the midst of establishing the group ethos, and a site location within the vicinity of Museuminsel was not within the project's consideration as the island already has a strong identity.

A physical visit to Berlin proved to be a thought-provoking experience. The site was surrounded by modern architecture, a significant contrast to the rest of the city, which led to questions about how to form a connection between the site and wider Berlin.

During the trip, the author museum-hopped and was advised not to look at the art but to observe how the architecture guides visitors from the entrance towards the exit. The advice assisted in building an understanding of the typology in reality rather than mapping out spatial programmes from plans retrieved digitally.

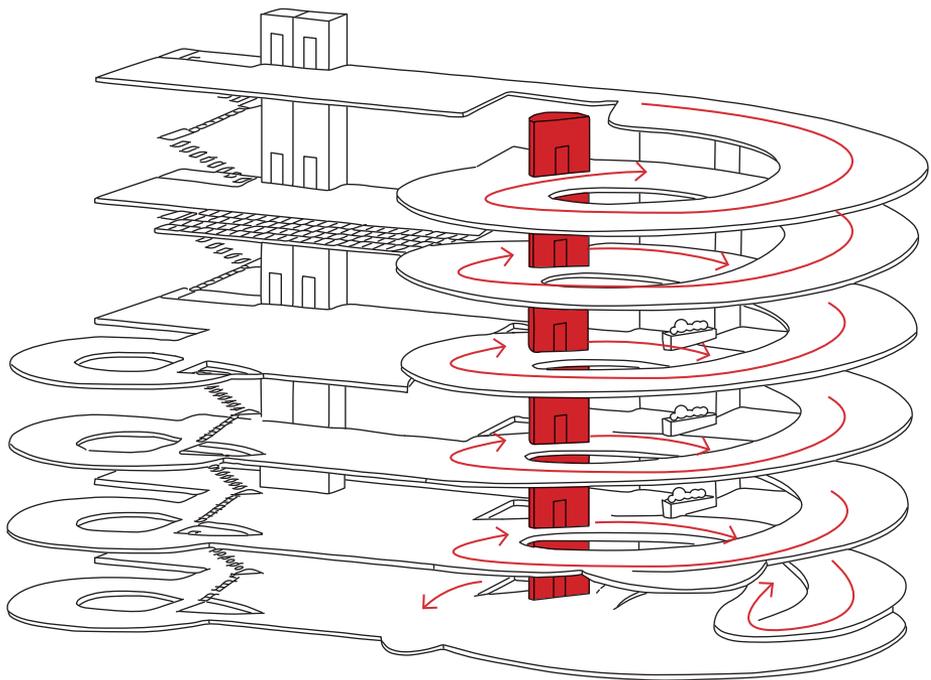


Fig 04. Sketch of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum



Fig 05. Photograph of site location (Own photograph)

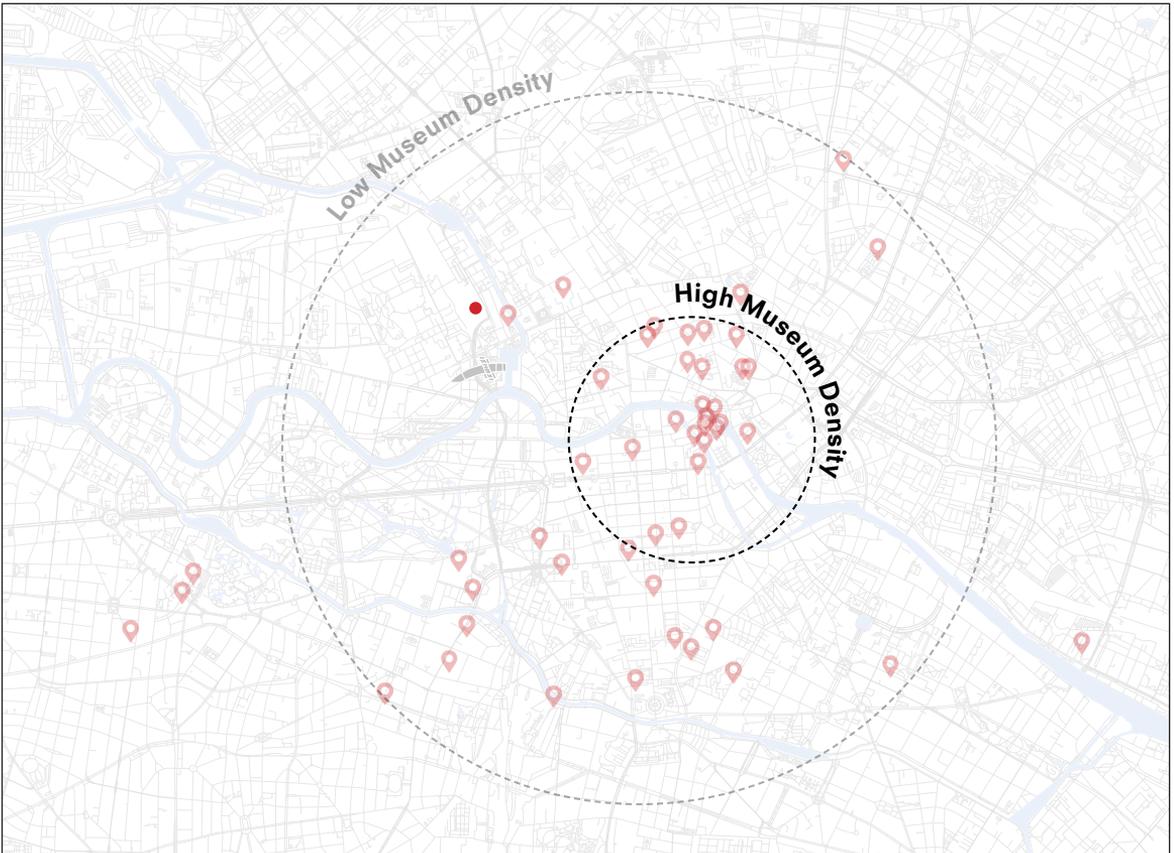


Fig 06. Density of museums in Berlin (Own illustration)

In retrospect, the mix of online and book research and physical visitations to experience the city proved to be a beneficial methodology for understanding the relationship between the project, the site, and the city. The author suggests that the final phases of the project could have benefitted from more sketches of the broad concept development before progressing towards detailed drawings of plans.

#### **04 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE BROADER SOCIETAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE**

Research into sustainable materials and local sourcing communicates with global environmental priorities of reducing embodied carbon. Through focusing on locally sourced materials derived from building waste, the project aligns with global efforts to mitigate climate impact as much as possible. Therefore, architectural design becomes a combination of scientific principles that can be applied in a practical, culturally relevant context.

The project aims to establish a benchmark for combining sustainability with architectural aesthetics and functionality without compromising design and visitor engagement, discussing future developments that wish to balance ecological responsibility with cultural and commercial demands and museum curation.

By creating a space that transparently showcases the artistic process, the museum does more than exhibit art—it involves the public in the process and educates them about it. The transparency that provides a platform for personal connections to art creation makes it accessible and relatable, fostering a deeper appreciation among visitors. The museum's advantageous location in EuropaCity assists its potential to strengthen the area's cultural fabric, contributing to Berlin's societal and cultural dynamic, along with its proximity to the high

traffic of travellers.

The project's methodology to research and design, merging practical constraints with creative aspirations, demonstrates how architectural projects can respond to their social and environmental contexts. The approach attempts to manifest the relevance of architecture in contemporary society by demonstrating how buildings serve as platforms for education, cultural exchange, and social consciousness.

In retrospect, while sustainable materials are a focus, the project could have explored additional sustainable practices like energy use and water conservation. In addition, the design process could have investigated how the building can control light and use sound and scent to devise a multisensory experience that enhances the art's perception and the museum's spatial experience. These realisations inspired the drive to continue investigating ways to enhance buildings with spatial experiences and innovative ways to improve the sustainability of future projects.

#### **05 ASSESSING THE VALUE OF THE TRANSFERABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES**

Firstly, integrating public studios and an Artists in Residence program within the museum's programme changes the traditional museum typology and serves as a case study for other cultural institutions looking to adopt a similar model where interaction between the artist and the public takes precedence, remaking traditional passive observation into active engagement in art.

Moreover, the museum's design emphasis on sustainable materials and construction practices aligns with global environmental objectives. Depending on climatic and geographical conditions, more projects can adopt principles such as utilising locally sourced materials and minimising carbon footprints, promoting broader adoption of eco-friendly architecture rather than the practice of green washing.

The project's method of using architectural

design to narrate the artistic process demonstrates some solutions to enhance spatial experiences in cultural buildings. The strategy can be transferred to other typologies, like educational buildings or libraries, where storytelling through architecture can enrich the user's experience and connection to the building. Additionally, the museum's strategic location and integration into EuropaCity's urban fabric offer insights into a project's ability to act as a cultural connection between different parts of the city. This exemplifies how future projects can use cultural programming to activate underutilised urban areas.

In reality, the project site is part of EuropaCity's ongoing urban planning, where another office block will be built soon. However, the site has more potential to maintain a connection to wider Berlin and send an immediate message to visitors who step foot in Berlin. Little interaction with the locals of Berlin took place during the design process, where projects of this scale could have benefitted from the assistance of local opinions, the public and artist communities alike as they understand the limitations and potentials better as users.

## **05 HAS THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION BEEN ANSWERED ACCORDINGLY?**

The primary purpose of this graduation studio project is to answer the research question, 'In what way can a building enhance a spatial experience or organisations?'. To an extent, an intertwined solution resulted in the design of the Other Art Museum.

The project developed routing as its first solution to enhance the spatial experience and, as its second solution, the material use of texture, colour, and contrast as an intertwined narrator of the creative process, which is evident in floor and stairs materials, keeping the walls clear for customisation. As another solution, a courtyard is implemented as a checkpoint and a feature to ensure visitors experience familiarity upon entry and while exploring the museum. With the courtyard and Courtside Hall as the core, the building's routing naturally revolves around it. Following

up with the core, the building is sectioned into 'Work' and 'Relax', organising uses of space in their respective themes and providing another clear experience to its users and visitors.

Ceiling-to-height ratios were also investigated as another indication of the narrative. The studios have a smaller ratio. In comparison, exhibition galleries have a larger ratio of impact and flexibility.

Another contrast is enforced from the exterior to the interior. The exterior is dark and moody, protective of itself and its contents, and embodies the characteristics of an introvert. The interior, on the other hand, is warm, open, and welcoming.

The answer is that these accumulated considerations influenced the project's answer to the main research question through routing, materials, and space programme organisation.

## **06 HOW HAS PRIORITISING MATERIAL USAGE AFFECTED THE PROJECT?**

Prioritising materials created awareness of carbon emissions imposed during building production, construction and use. As the team compiled a Material Atlas, many decisions were based on the information collected. Most materials used to construct The Other Art Museum are timber products such as primary and secondary structures, as many woods are known as carbon sinks and emit low carbon emissions.

The construction is also designed to have prefabricated wall panels, reducing in-situ work, while the primary construction is based on demountability.

Hence, the design aims to align with Germany's and international efforts to reduce carbon emissions and construct sustainably.

## **07 WHAT WAS THE ETHICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGE OF DESIGNING A MUSEUM?**

Creating a cohesive routing is challenging. Curating a wayfinding strategy without

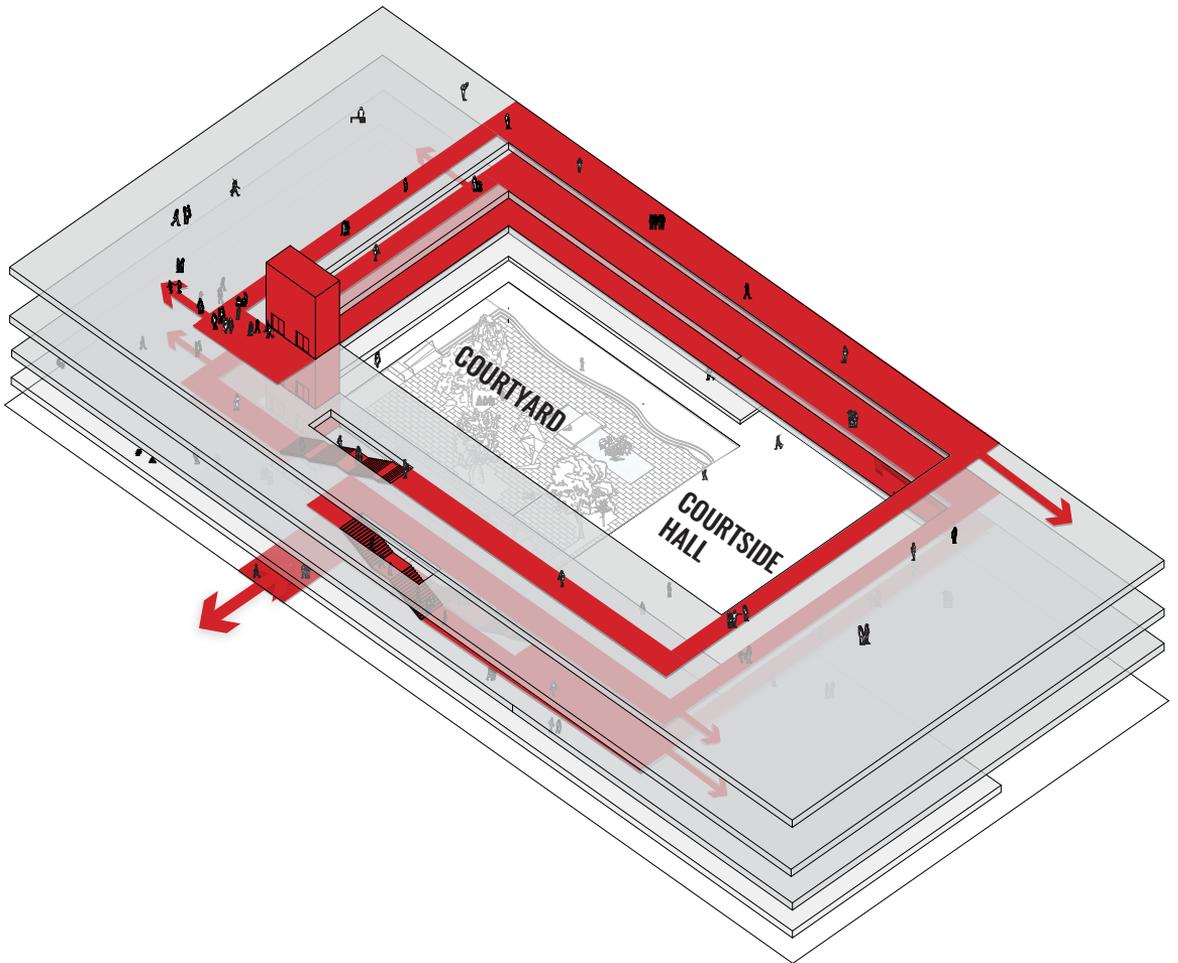


Fig 07. Routing conclusion of the Other Art Museum.

the immediate use of signage was one of the themes that continued to challenge the project till its later stages, primarily due to potential dead ends. Determining the best routing system to guide visitors through the museum and enhance their experience took the most prolonged consideration. Integrating features like the courtyard and Courtside Hall was implemented after multiple conversations and research.

Another challenge was balancing showcasing the artistic process and exhibiting final pieces. The project had to balance being a museum and a workshop building with the studios within the programme. The balance also dictated the narration of the creative process.

On the subject of ethical issues, designing the Other Art Museum struggled with providing the mobility challenged the experience of routing. The project also has high use of glazing which also contradicts the need to reduce using glass as its producing consumes a high amount of energy.



## FIGURES

**Fig 01.** Photo of child and guardian interacting with installation in Pergamon Museum taken in 2023. (Own photograph)

**Fig 02. Masuike, M. (2023)** *Examples of the art produced by students in art classes Ms. Nisenbaum taught as part of her residency* [Photograph]. The New York Times. <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2023/04/30/multimedia/30sp-museums-residencies-03-kwzq/30sp-museums-residencies-03-kwzq-superJumbo.jpg?quality=75&auto=webp>

**Fig 03.** Narration and arrangement of The Other Art Museum spaces.

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**Fig 05.** Photograph of preferred site location (Own photograph)

**Fig 06.** Density of museums in Berlin (Own illustration)

**Fig 07.** Routing conclusion of the Other Art Museum.

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