

SHEET HAPPENS ALL THE TIME!

Re-imagination of Museum Objects Through Materiality Using Phygital Storytelling

Pranali Tari
THED MFA Thesis

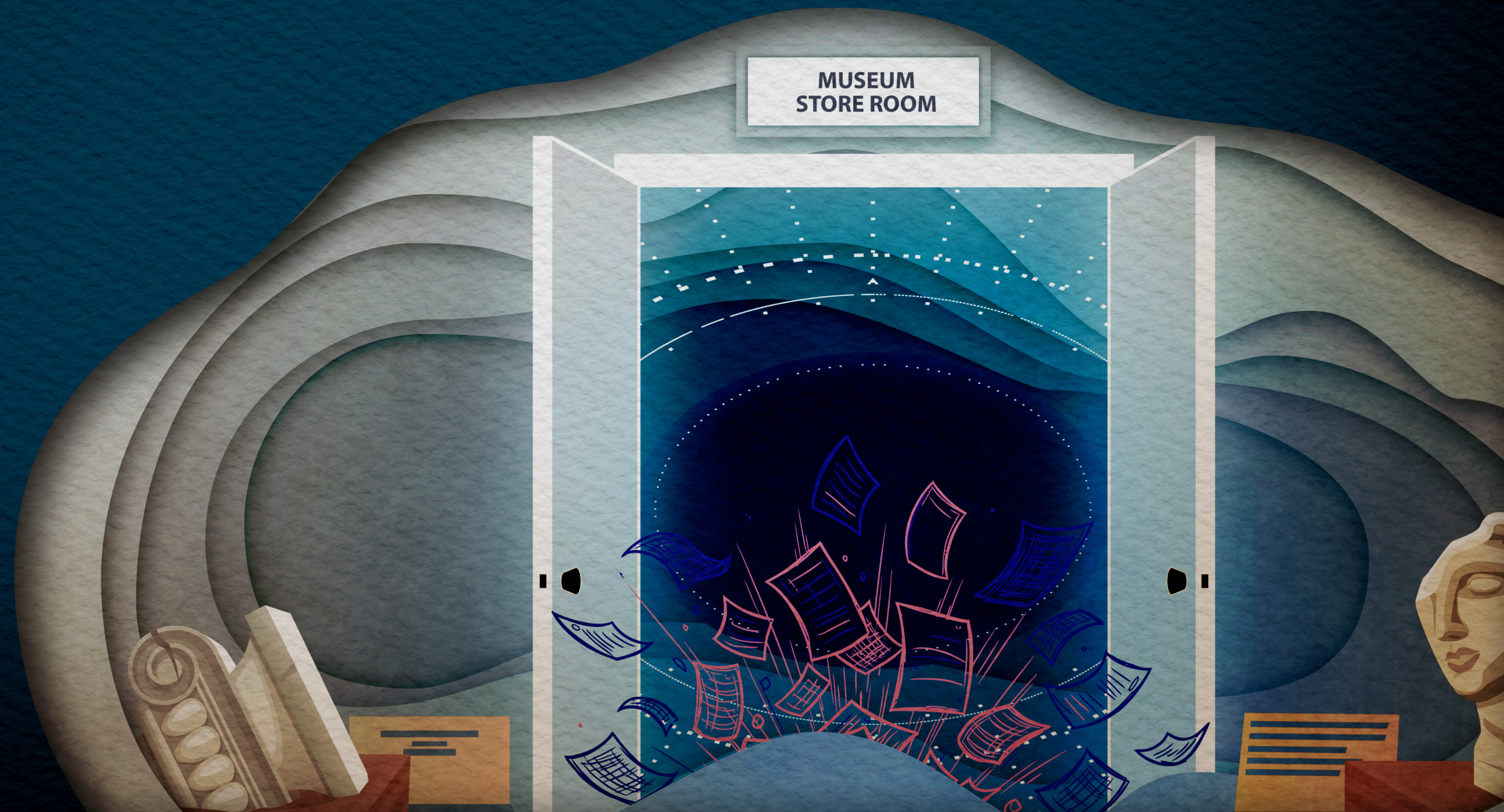


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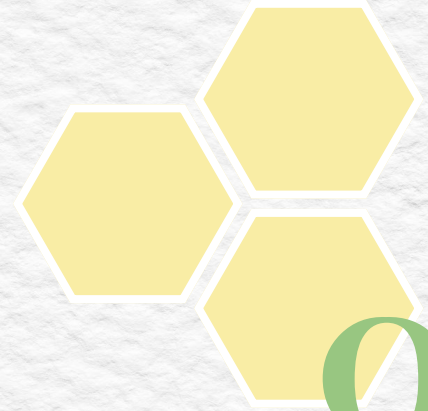
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Story

- Journey Map
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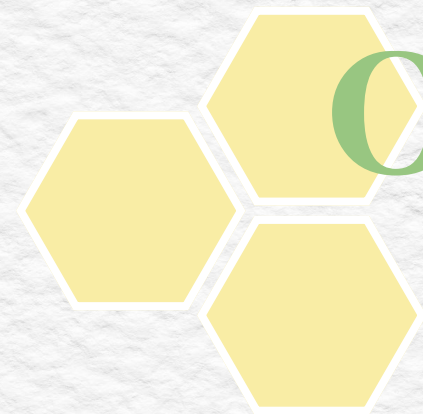
Conclusion





Objects become extensions of human experiences through our interactions with them.

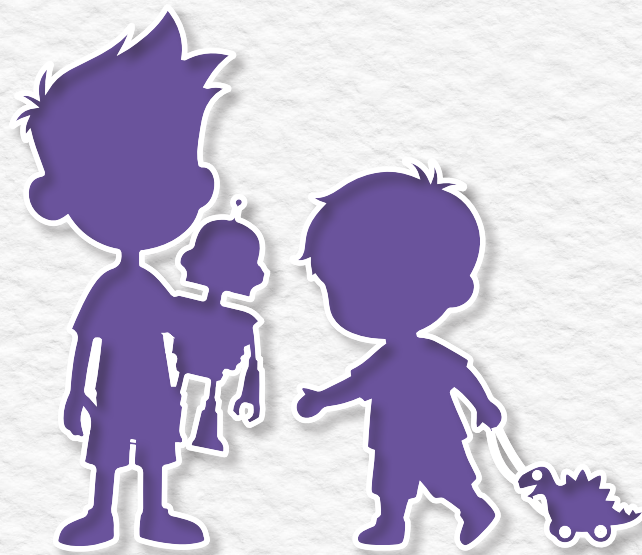




Objects

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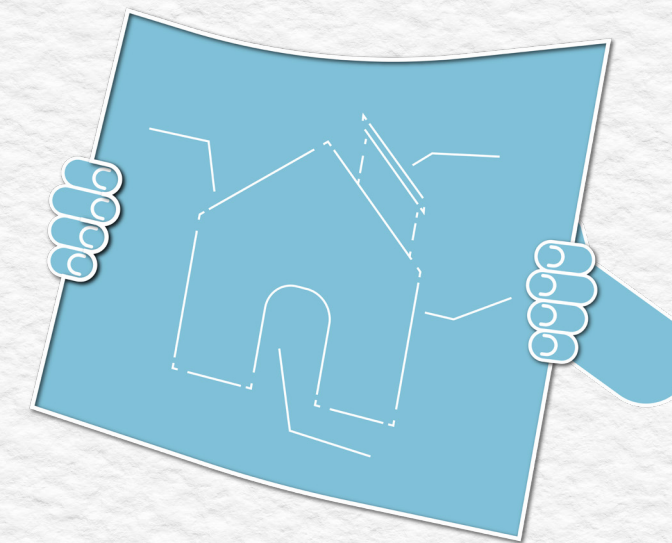
Valuable Connections



Memories



Experiences



Presence



Problem Statement

Museums have historically amplified the **meaning and value of objects** by **contextualizing** them as **cultural representations** worthy of preservation and interpretation. However, the **evolving roles of museums**, driven by **societal shifts**, have created growing **tension between museums' artifact preservation efforts and visitors' expectations for sensory, immersive experiences**, further intensified by their **increasing reliance on digital tools**.

This tension leaves museums at **risk of weakening human-object relationships** by distancing visitors from the physical and sensory qualities that give objects their intrinsic value. Consequently, **objects** that once carried extraordinary meaning through human interaction **risk becoming static displays** behind glass or objects preserved in museum storerooms, **disconnected from the material experiences** that shape the world around us.

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands of varying shades of purple and blue, creating a sense of depth and movement.

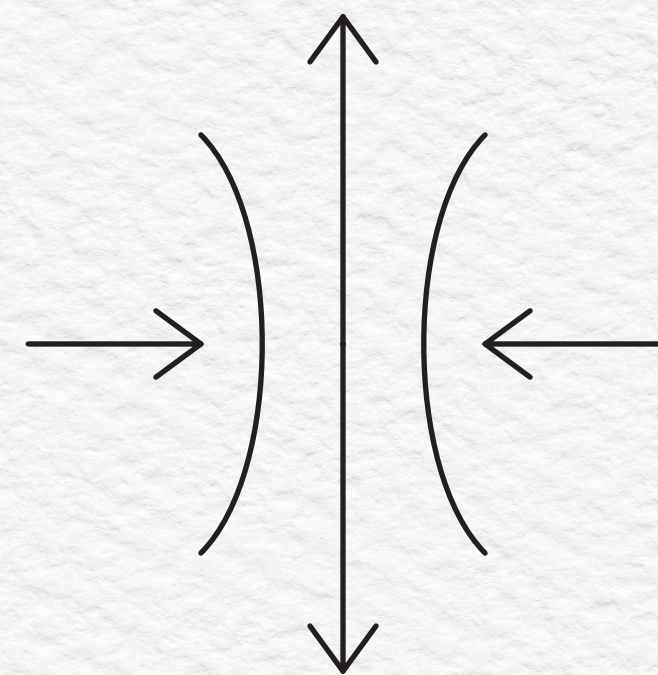
Problem Summary

Museums' Artifact Preservation Efforts

Objects placed behind glass or in museum storerooms

Lack of tactile experiences

Lack of effective storytelling methods



Visitors' Expectations From Museums

Sensory immersion & engagement

Experience enhanced through digital tools

Emotional embodiment



Thesis Statement

This thesis proposes a re-imagined museum experience where **phygital storytelling** is used as a methodology for museums to **strengthen human-object relationships** by transforming passive observation into **immersive, tactile, and emotionally resonant experiences**.

Through the integration of **themed entertainment design principles** such as **physical interaction, digital enhancement, participatory storytelling, and game-play**, the research explores how museums can **preserve artifact authenticity** while simultaneously meeting contemporary visitors' **expectations for engagement, immersion, and agency**.

Using the **materiality of objects**, the thesis demonstrates how ordinary objects can be **re-contextualized within a museum environment** to **reveal intrinsic cultural, historical, scientific, and emotional value**, ultimately encouraging audiences to **rediscover the extraordinary within the ordinary**.



Thesis Map

Approach

Phygital storytelling adapted from
themed entertainment design

What

Origins

Legacy

Spectacle

Evolution

Adaptation

Why

Bridge the gap between preservation
efforts and visitors' expectations for
immersive experiences



Statement of Concept

“Sheet Happens All the Time!” is an extension of the traditional museum experience for all ages. It **adapts phygital storytelling to highlight the underlying meaning of “paper-based” museum artifacts** through a **storyline rooted in the material paper and its history**. It aims to bridge the gap between the modern visitor expectations and the traditional approach museums use to present paper-based objects on display by employing **a tiered narrative structure**. The narrative engagement is amplified by intellectual property (IP)-based gamification strategies. This **IP-based, story-driven game-play**, though optional, allows each visitor to choose their route and level of engagement, **offering both interactive and personalized options** through phygital components. The museum experience model **re-establishes the significance of paper’s material culture** by characterizing paper’s physical properties and intrinsic qualities in the story.

In terms of museums, this narrative-focused design strategy is adaptable and flexible and can be presented based on the museum’s area of focus.



Narrative Strategy

Fostering engagement and interactivity through **Locke & Key inspired IP-based gamification that focuses on magical keys and role play.**

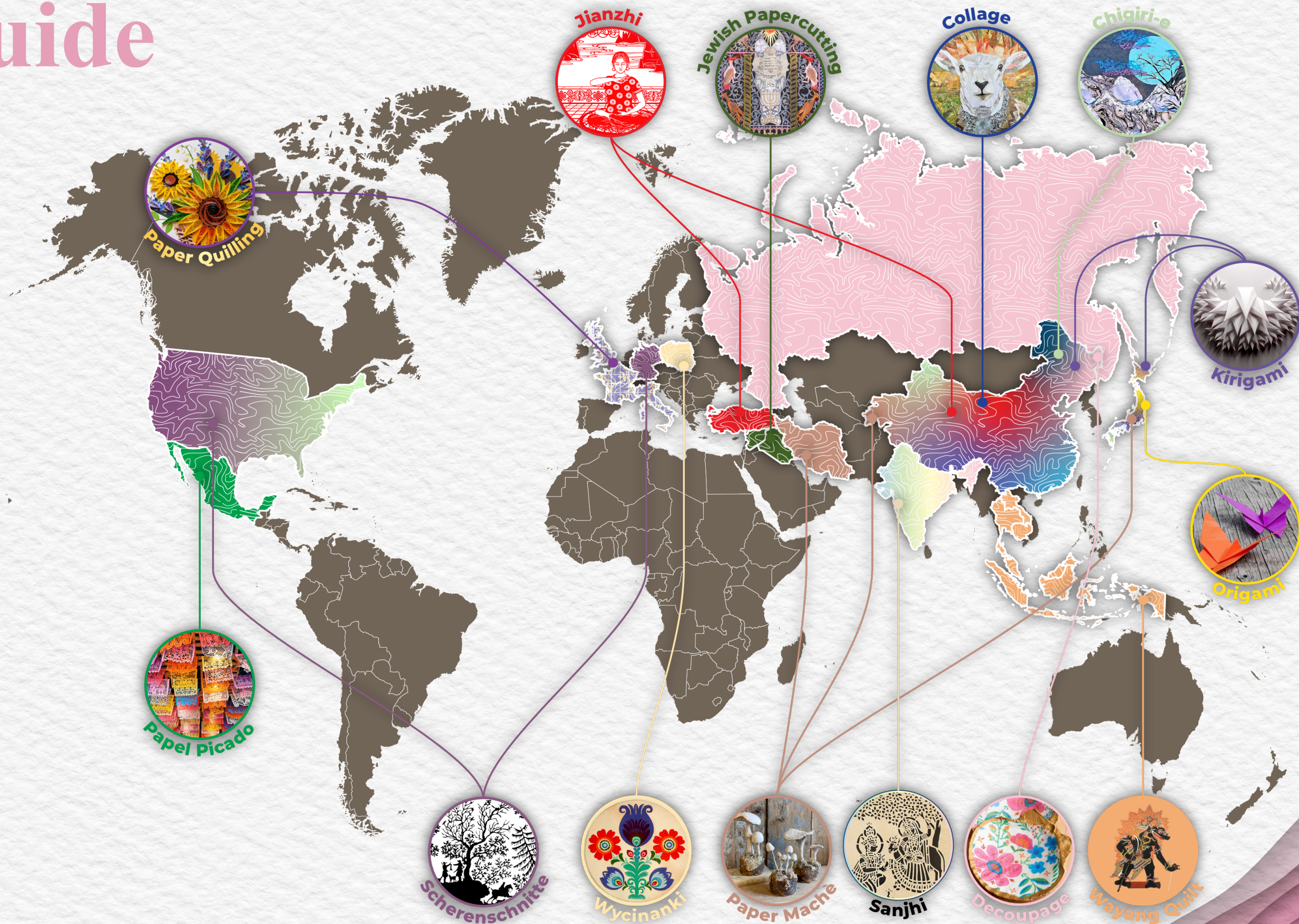
Emotional build-up through **character design.**

Depiction of history of paper and its impact on various field of study through **4 educational & entertaining themed inquiry zones.**

Narrative experience through **3 tiers that allow personalization.**

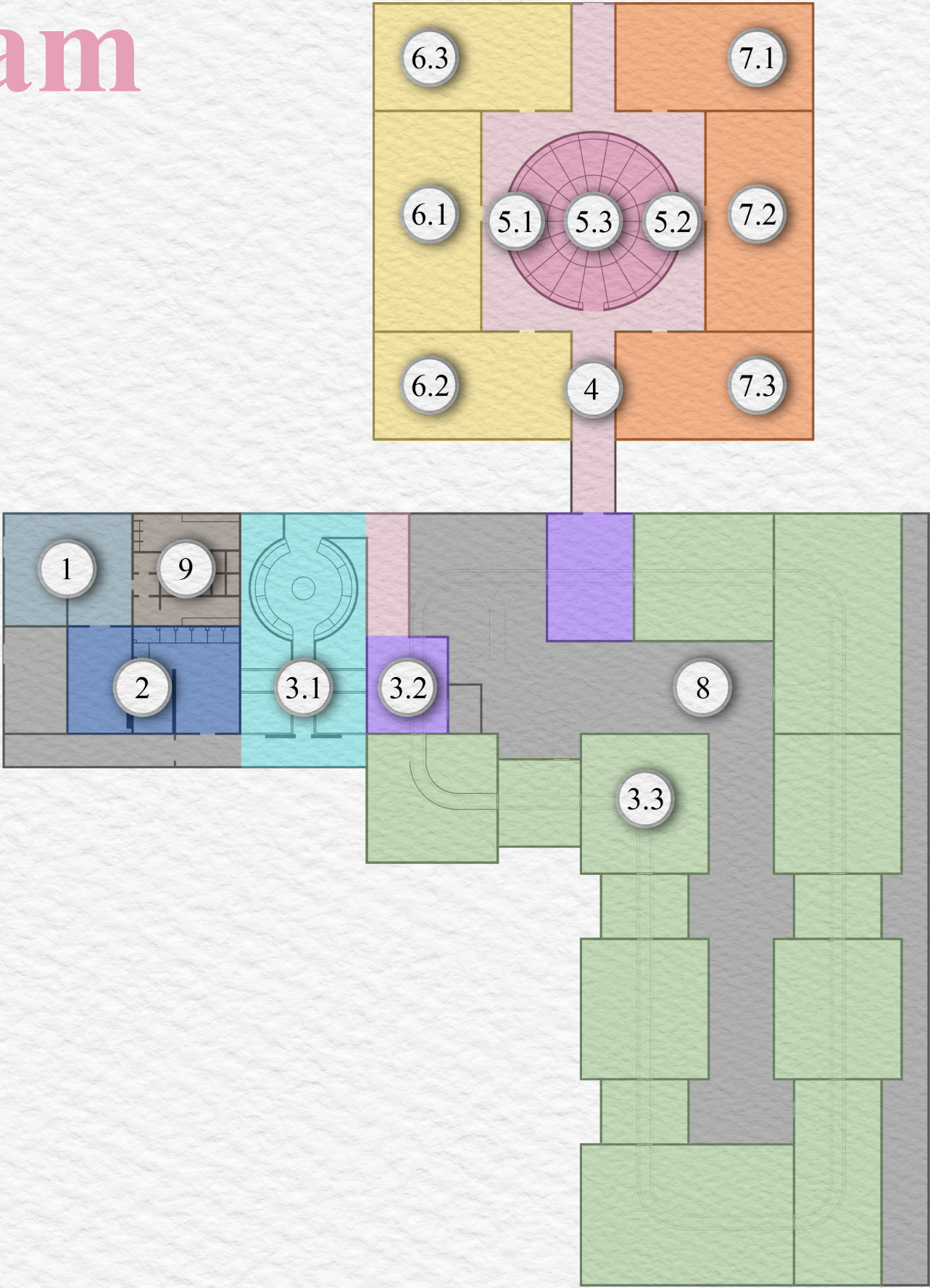


Style Guide



Bubble Diagram

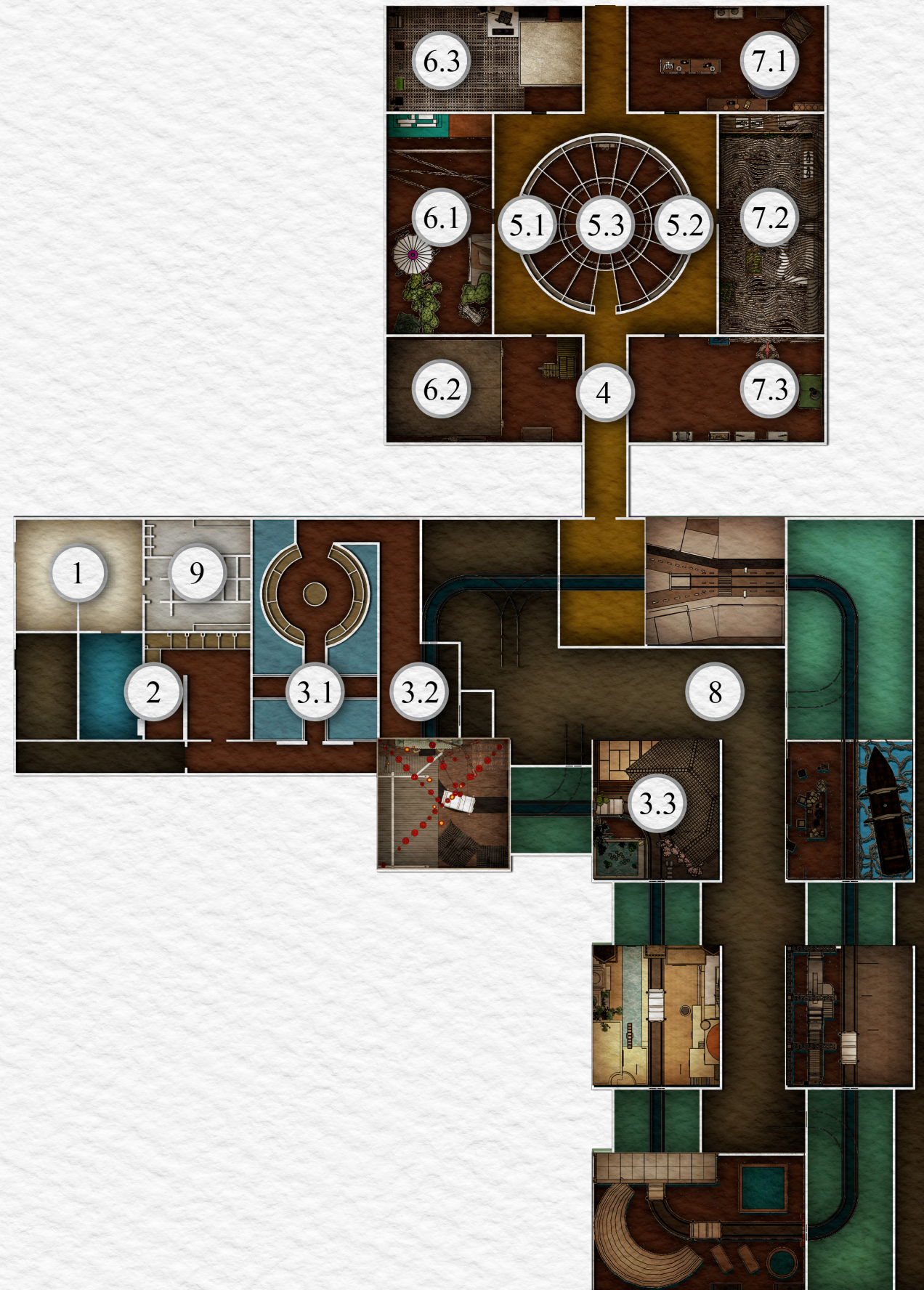
- 1. Entrance Lobby Area
- 2. Pre-show 1
- 3. Paper as a Material
 - 3.1. Pre-show 2 (Paper Emerges)
 - 3.2. Loading/Unloading Area
 - 3.3. Ride Experience (Paper Travels & Paper Evolves)
- 4. Passage Area
- 5. Paper as a Model
 - 5.1. Paper Shines
 - 5.2. Paper Fades
 - 5.3. Paper Re-emerges



- 6. Paper as a Medium (Interactive Zone 1)
 - 6.1. Paper Makes
 - 6.2. Paper Helps
 - 6.3. Paper Breaks
- 7. Paper as a Muse (Interactive Zone 2)
 - 7.1. Paper Experiments
 - 7.2. Paper Folds
 - 7.3. Paper Entertains
- 8. Back of House
- 9. Restrooms

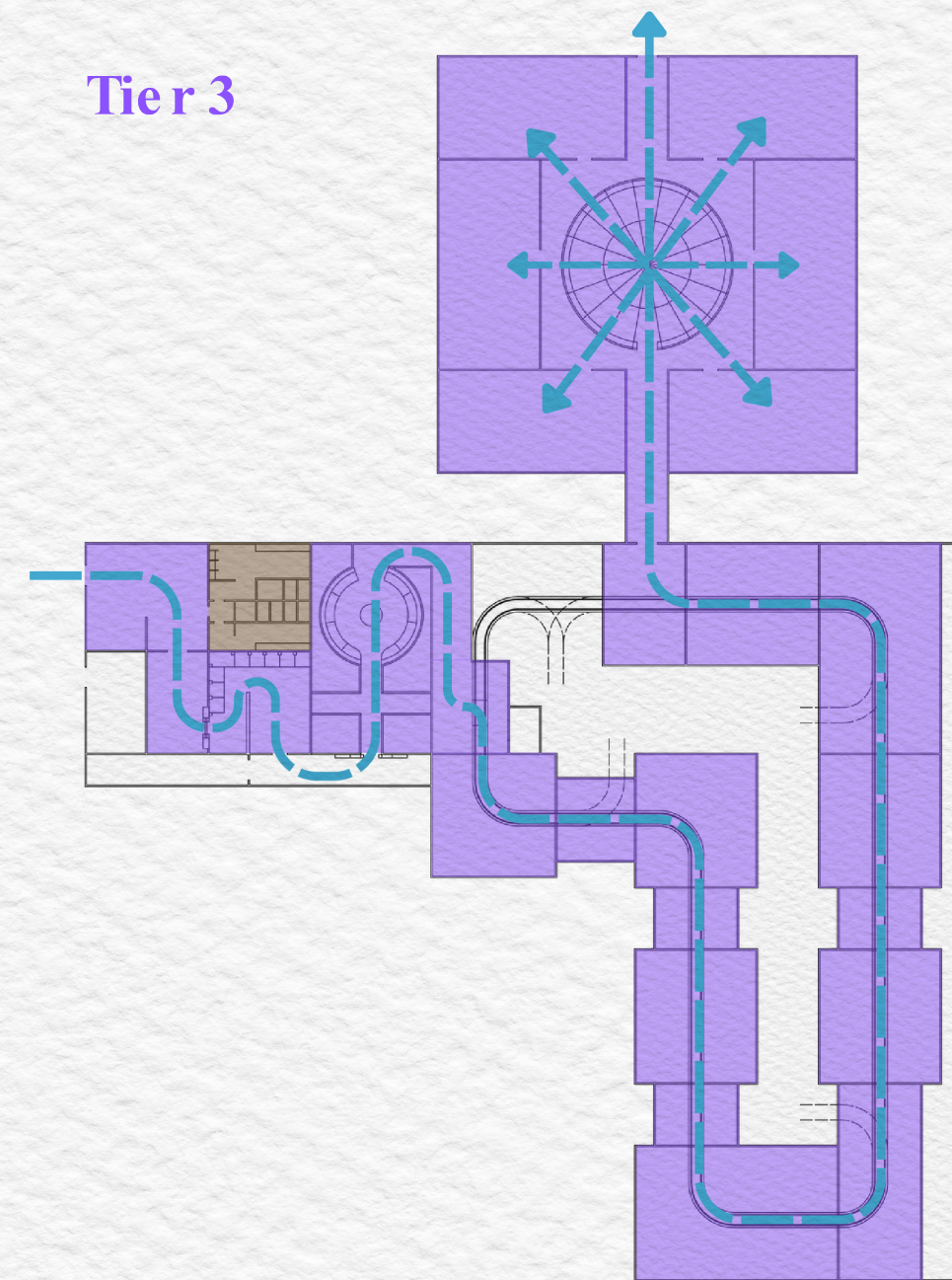
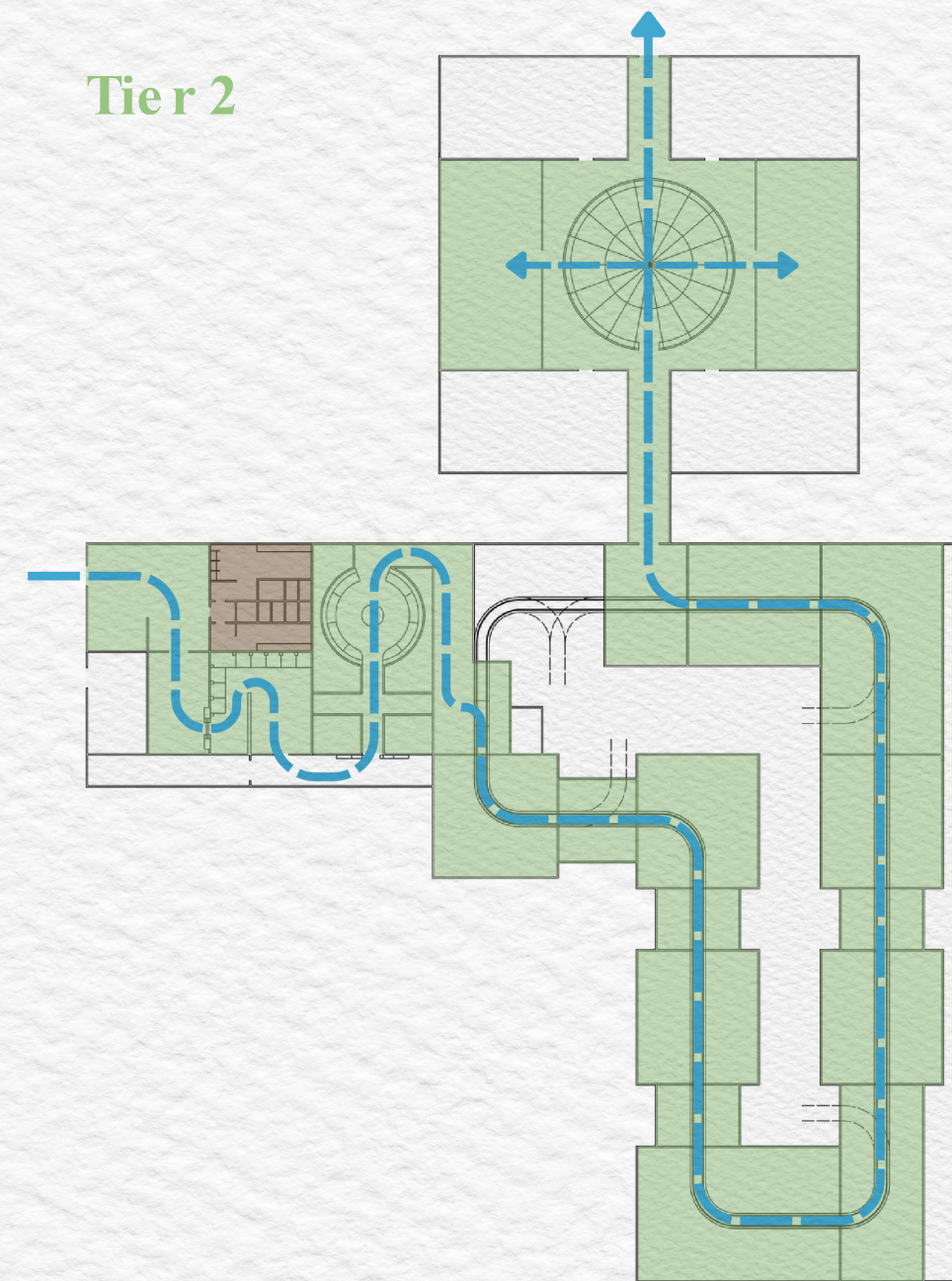
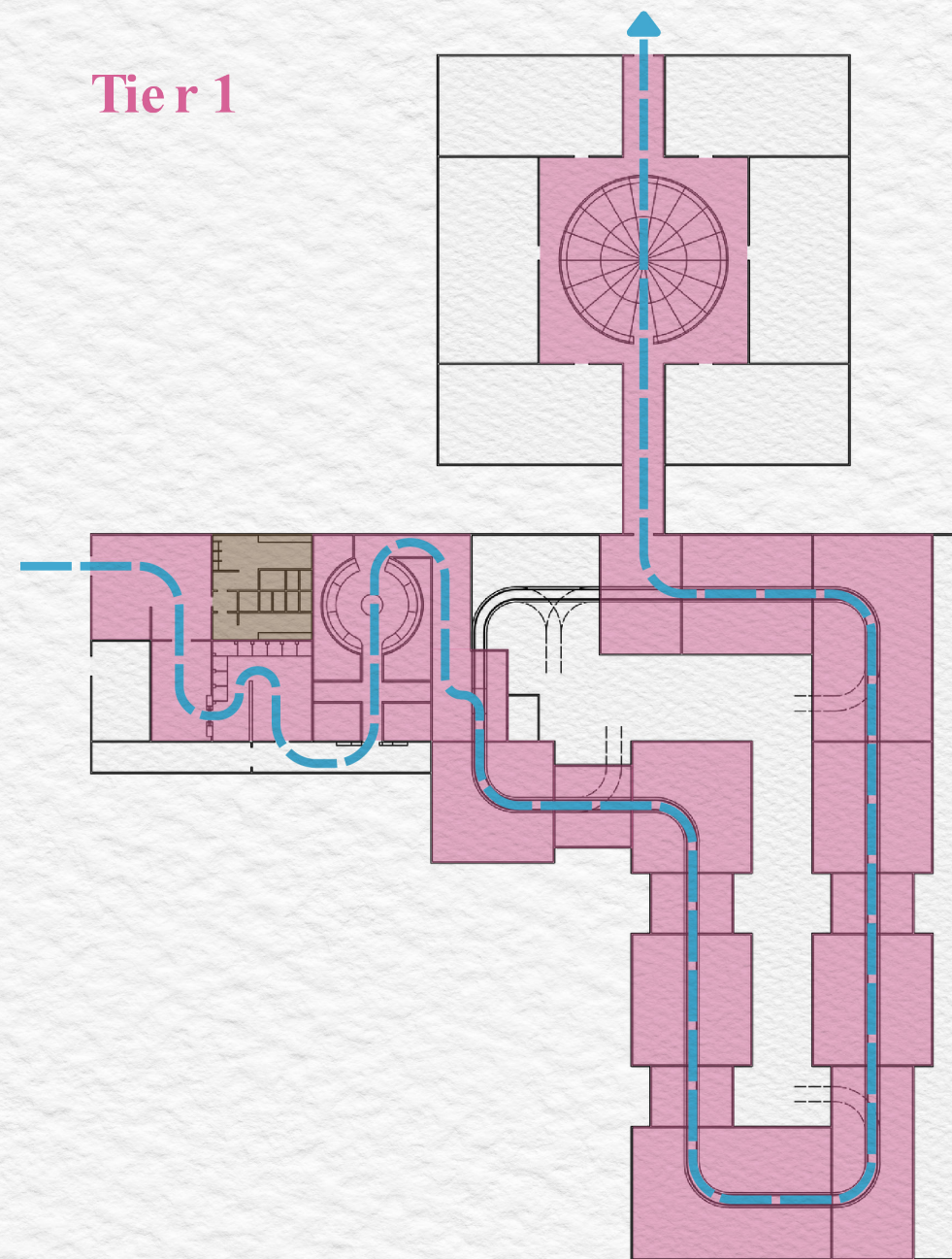
Floor Plan

1. Entrance Lobby Area
2. Pre-show 1
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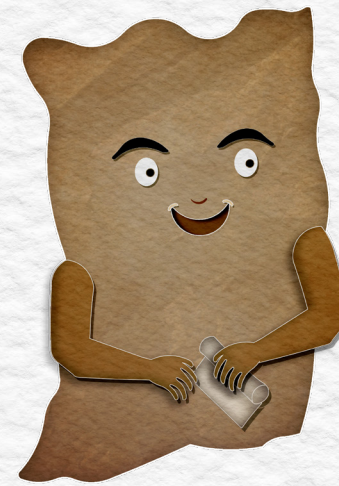
Journey Map through Tiers



Characters



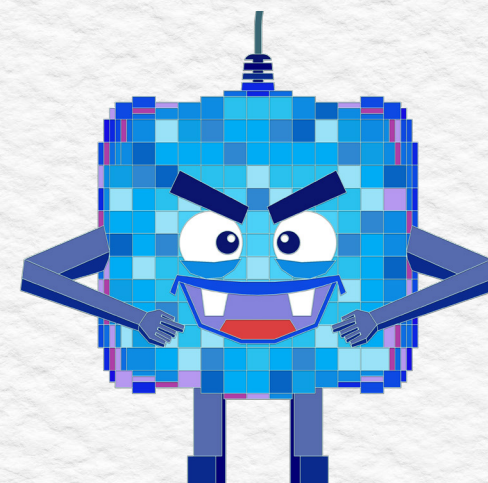
Chamberlin Locke



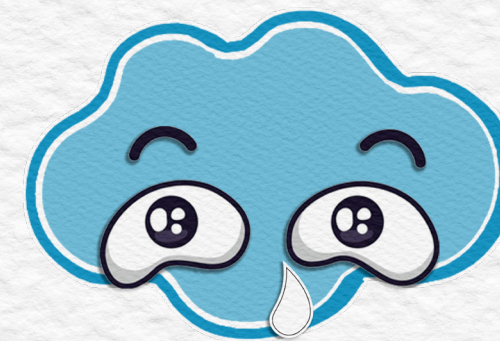
Sheet



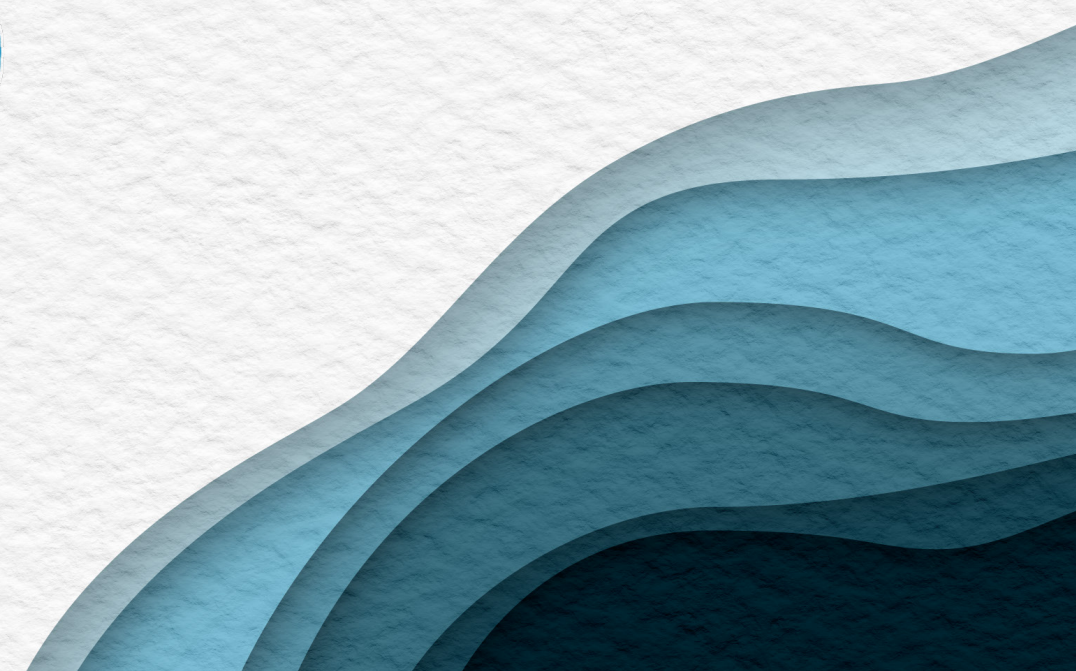
Cai Lun



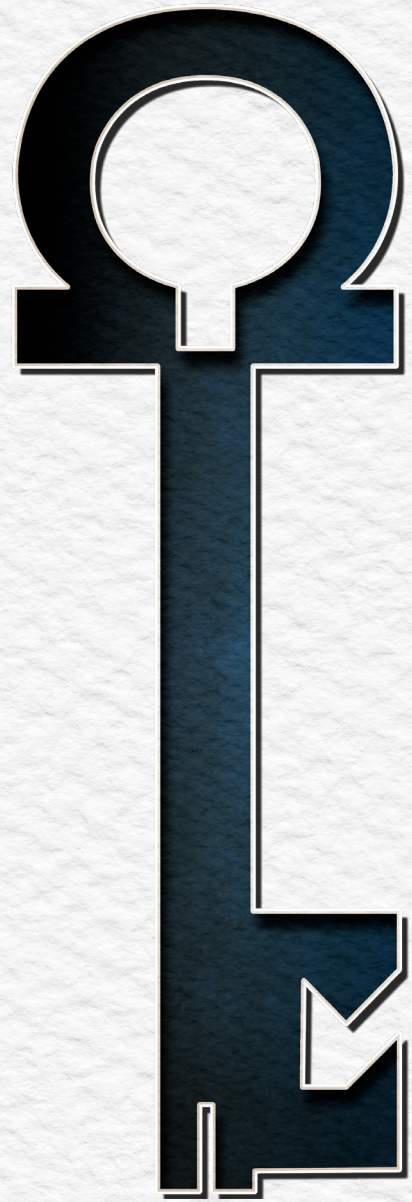
Pixel



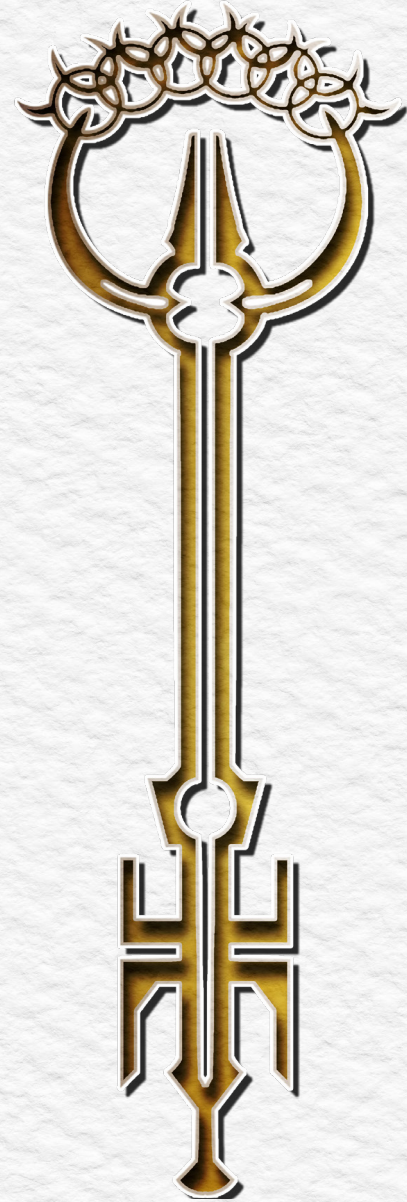
Cloud



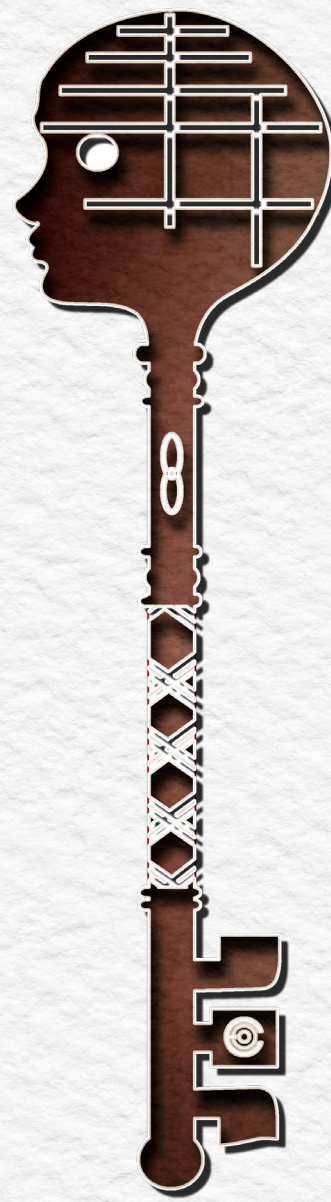
Gamification



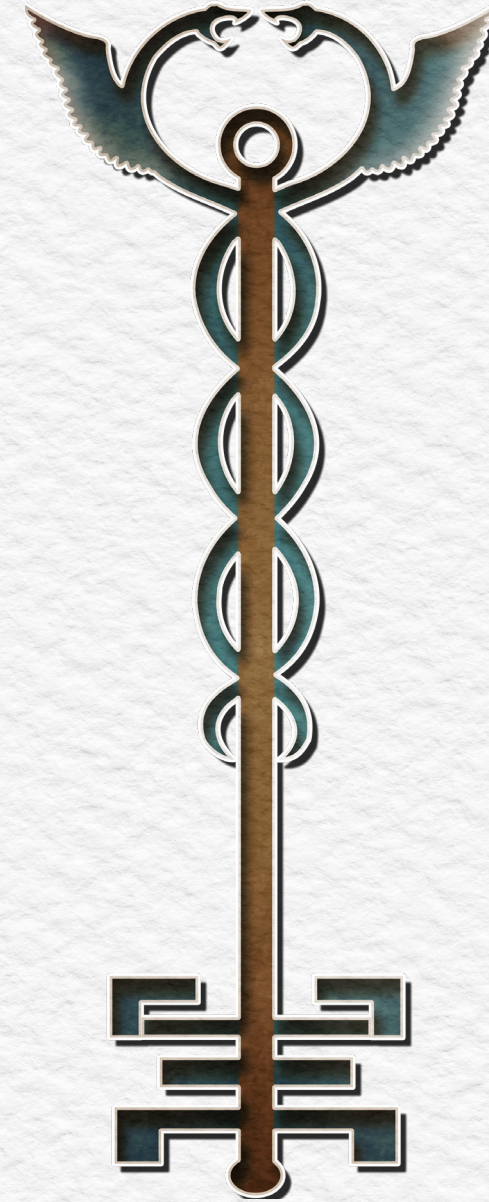
Omega Key



Anywhere Key



Head Key



Mending Key

Gamification (Extended)



Some Rare Keys from the Locke & Key Universe

Storyboards Depicting the Backstory

At Home Experience



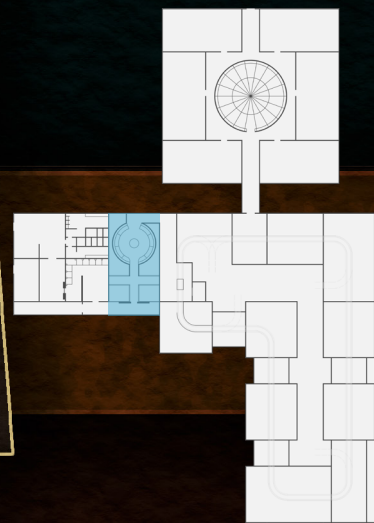
Upon Arrival





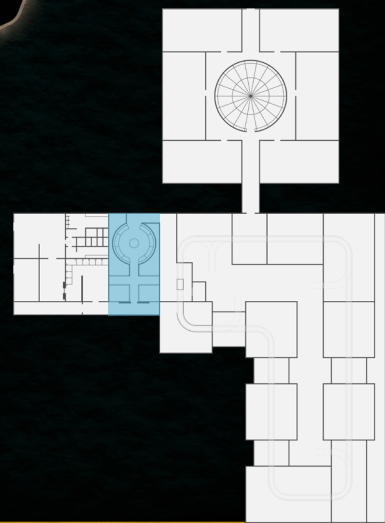
Cai Lun
Memorial Hall

Paper as a Material: Cai Lun Memorial Hall, China



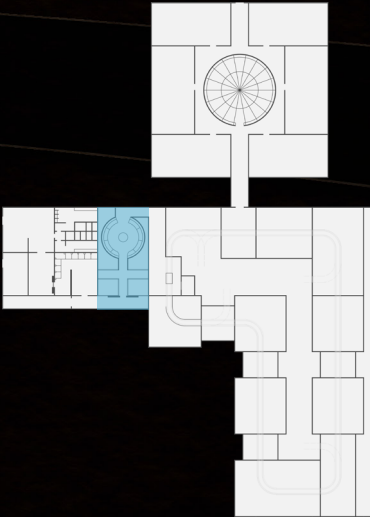


Paper as a Material: Paper Emerges (Entrance to Cai Lun's head depicting his memories)





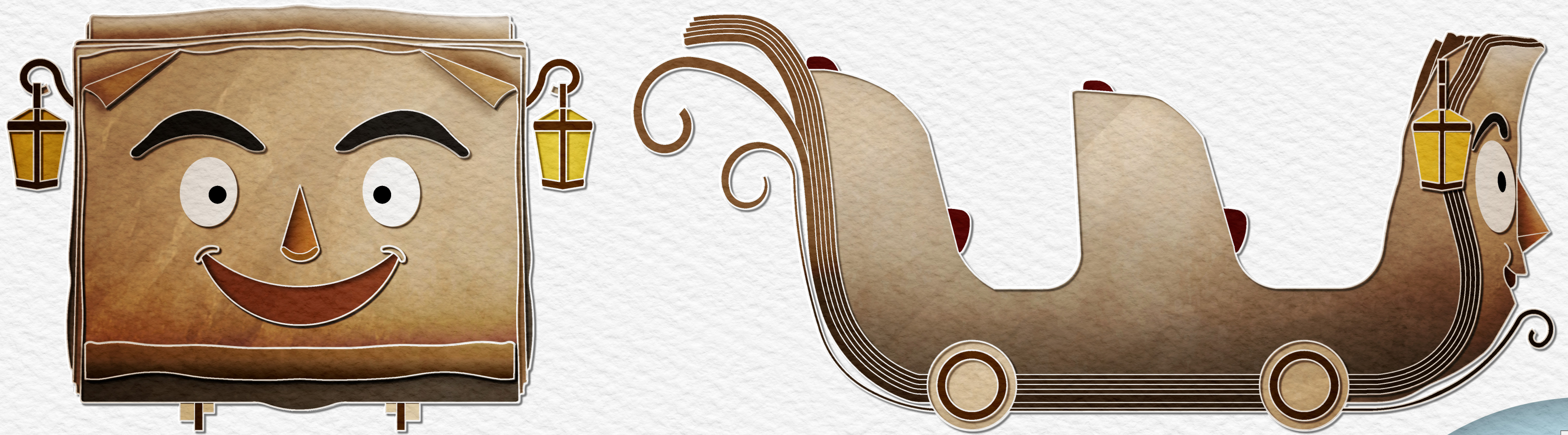
Paper as a Material: Paper Emerges (Inspiration behind the paper-making process)





Paper as a Material: Paper Emerges (Paper-making process demonstrated inside Cai Lun's head, narrated by Cai Lun himself)

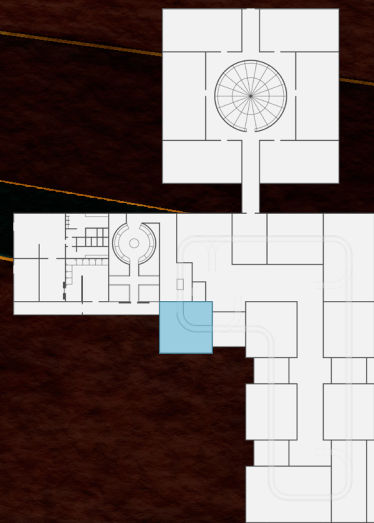
Sheet's Transformation

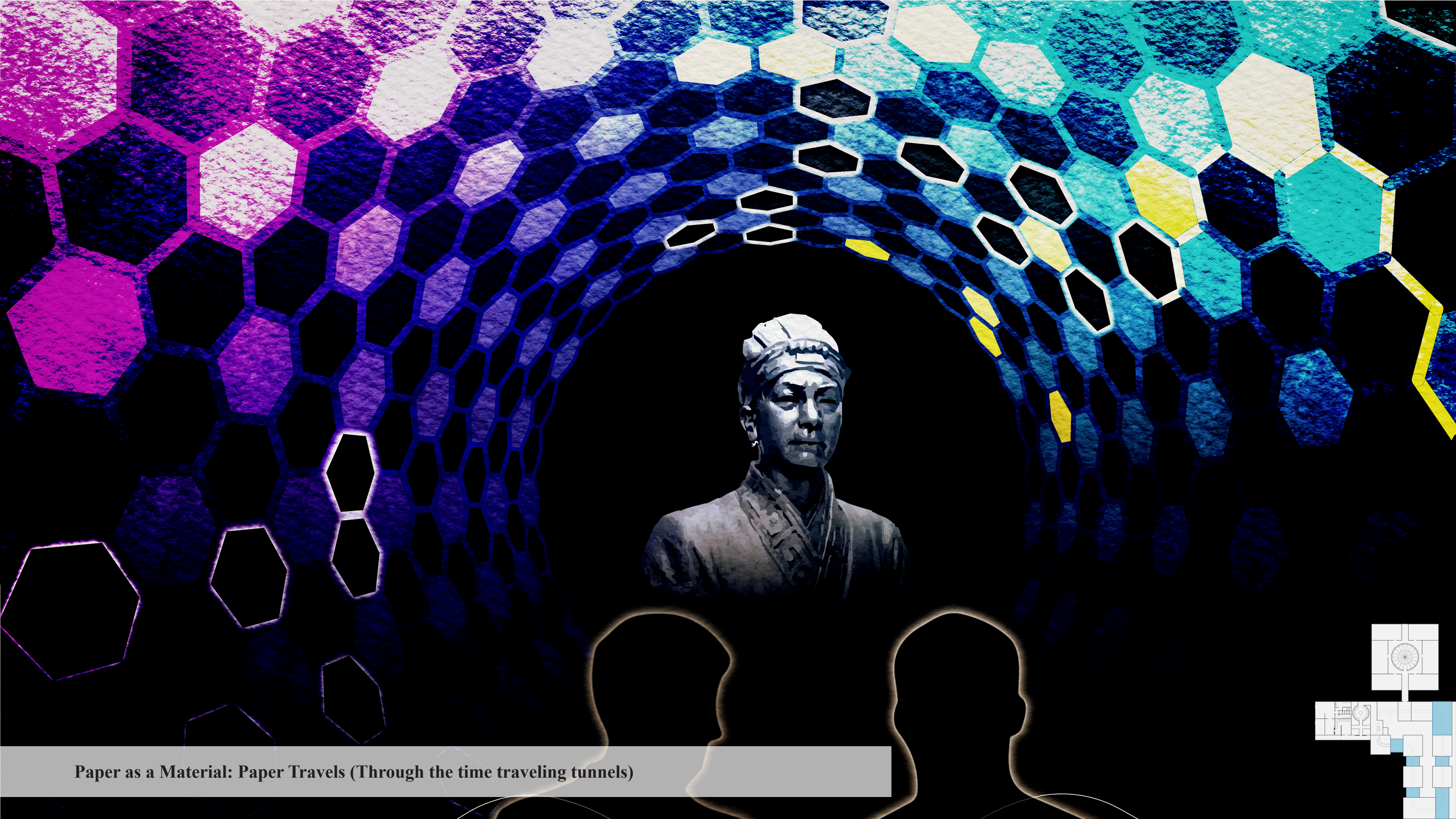


Sheet's transformation into a ride vehicle



Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To China and becomes an integral part of the culture)

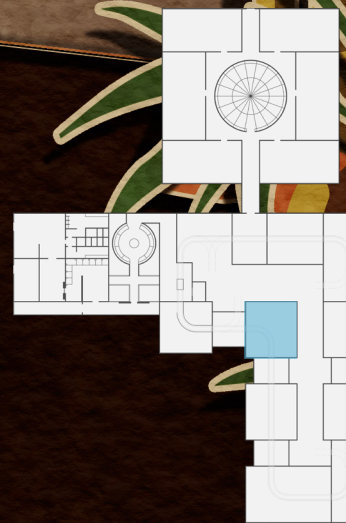




Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (Through the time traveling tunnels)



Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To Japan and becomes significant part of the Japanese culture)





Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To the Middle East where world's first water-powered paper mill was established)



Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To Europe where it competes against parchment)

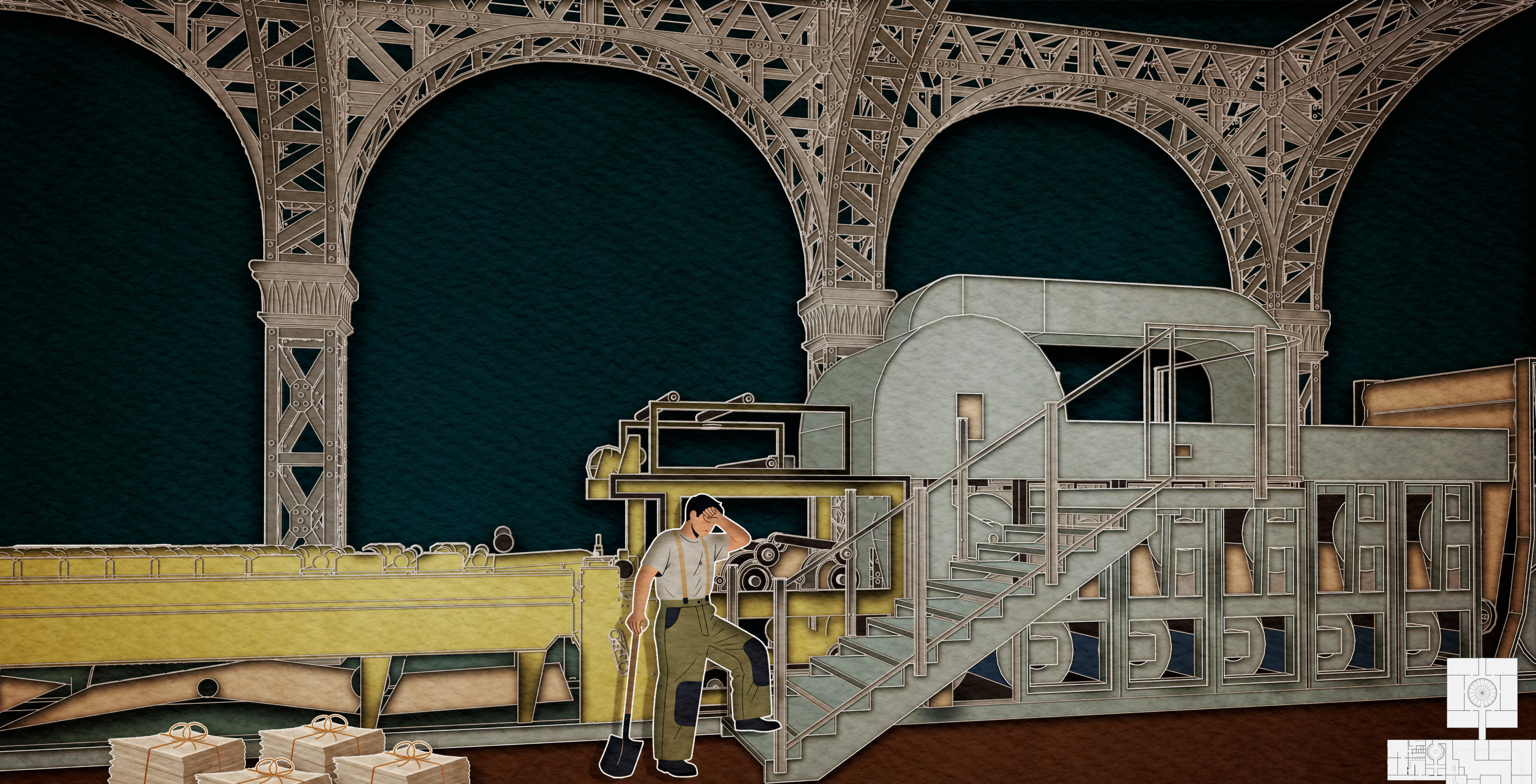


Paper as a Material: Paper Travels to Europe (First paper mill in Fabriano, Italy)

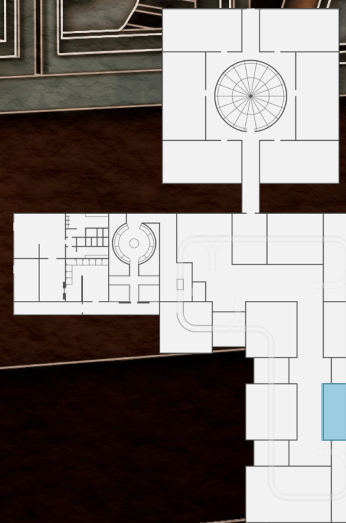


Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To the United Kingdom where it transforms from a luxury to necessity)



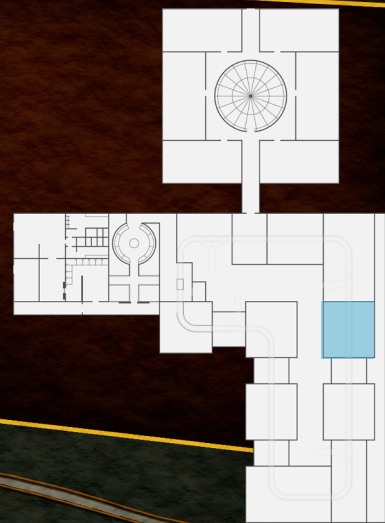


Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To the United Kingdom and evolves as a result of the Industrial Revolution)





Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To the Americas, crossing the Atlantic Ocean)

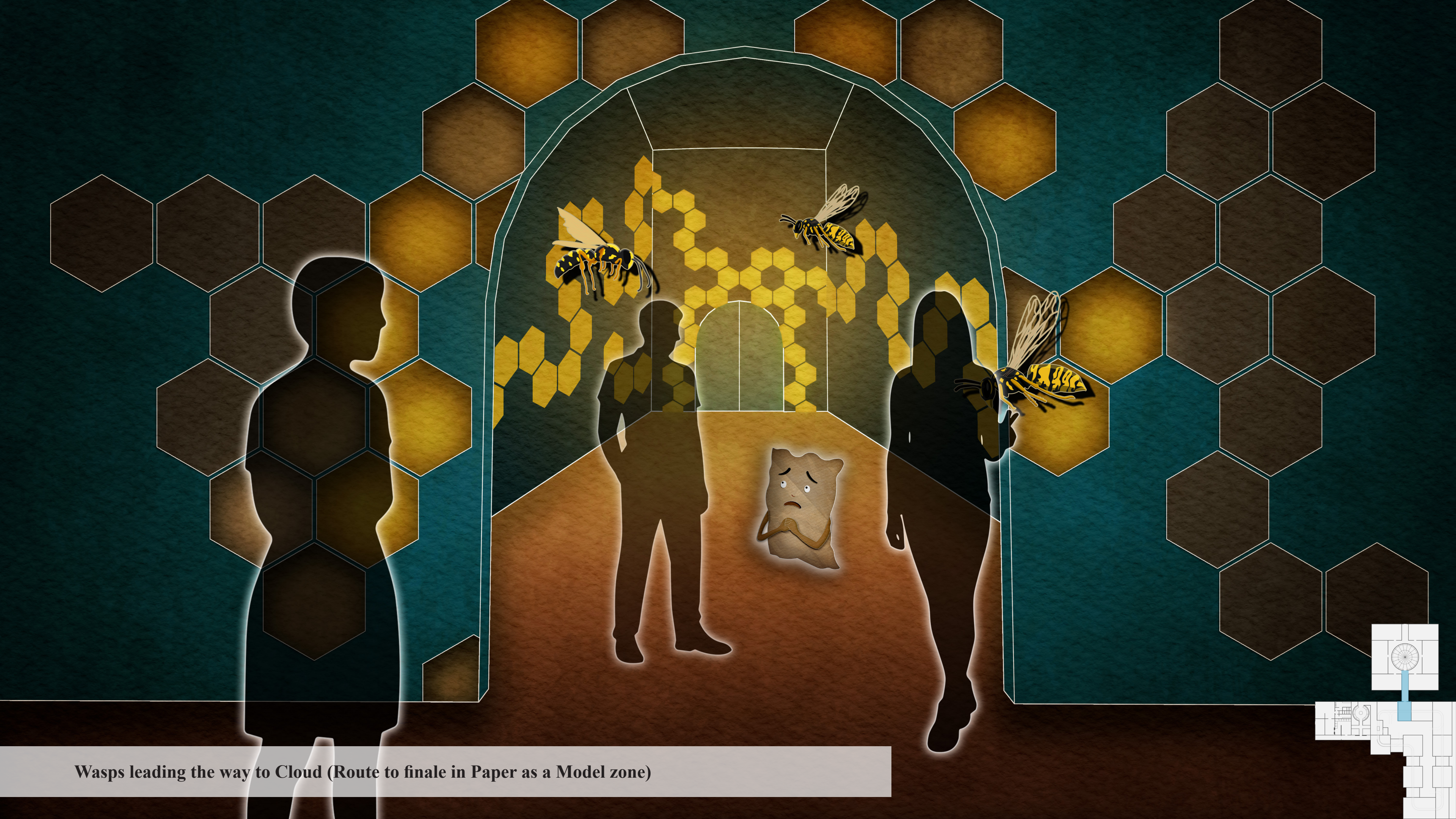




Paper as a Material: Paper Travels (To the Americas and evolves into an everyday, ubiquitous material)



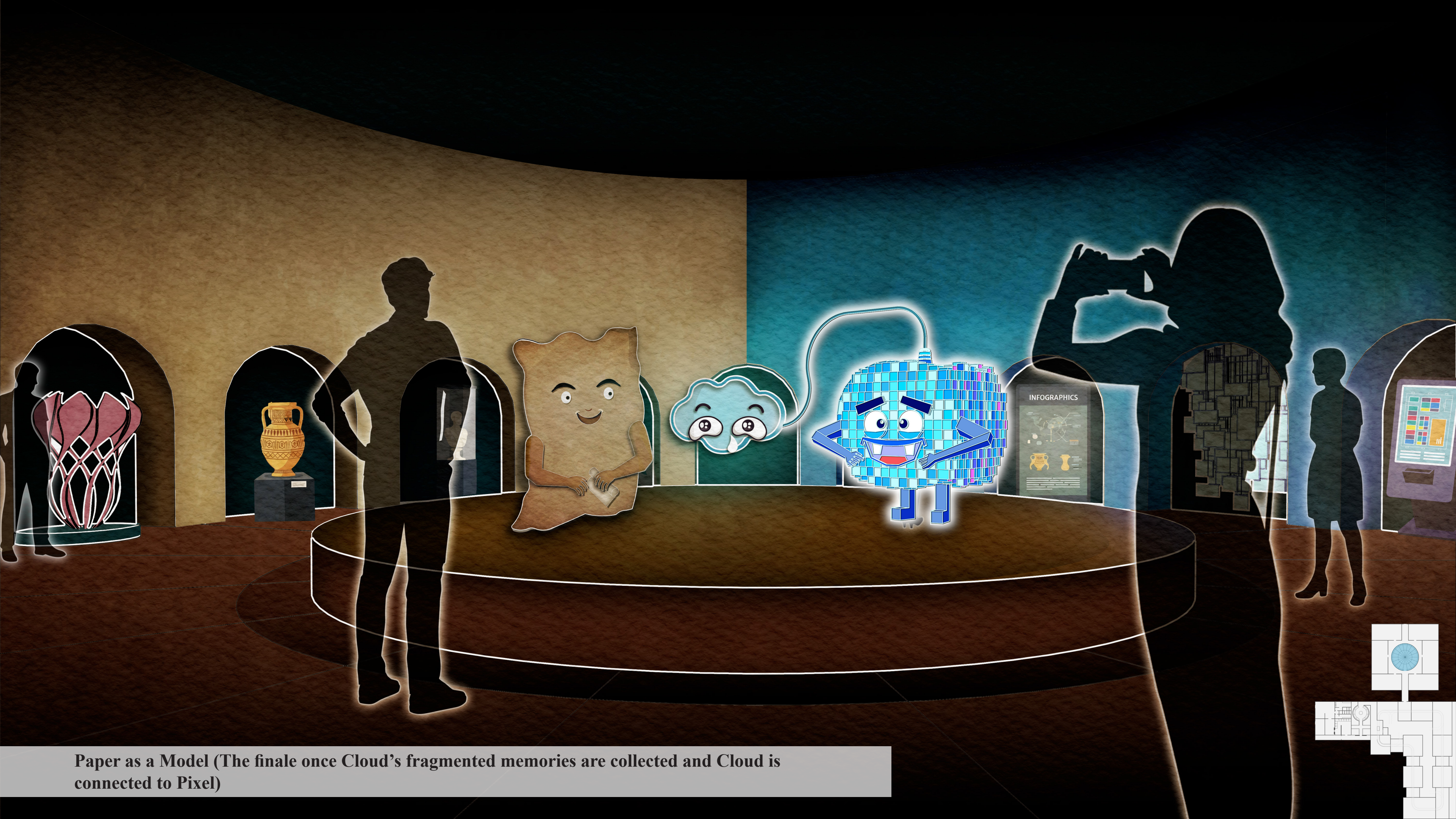
Disruption caused by Pixel to capture Sheet



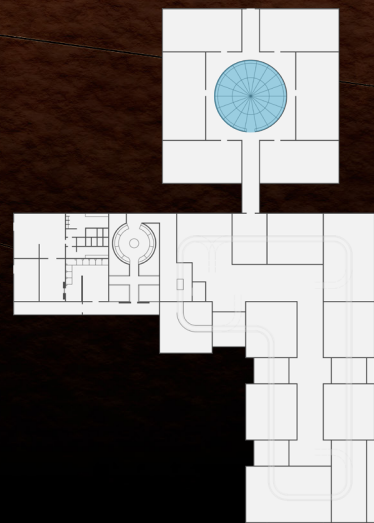
Wasps leading the way to Cloud (Route to finale in Paper as a Model zone)

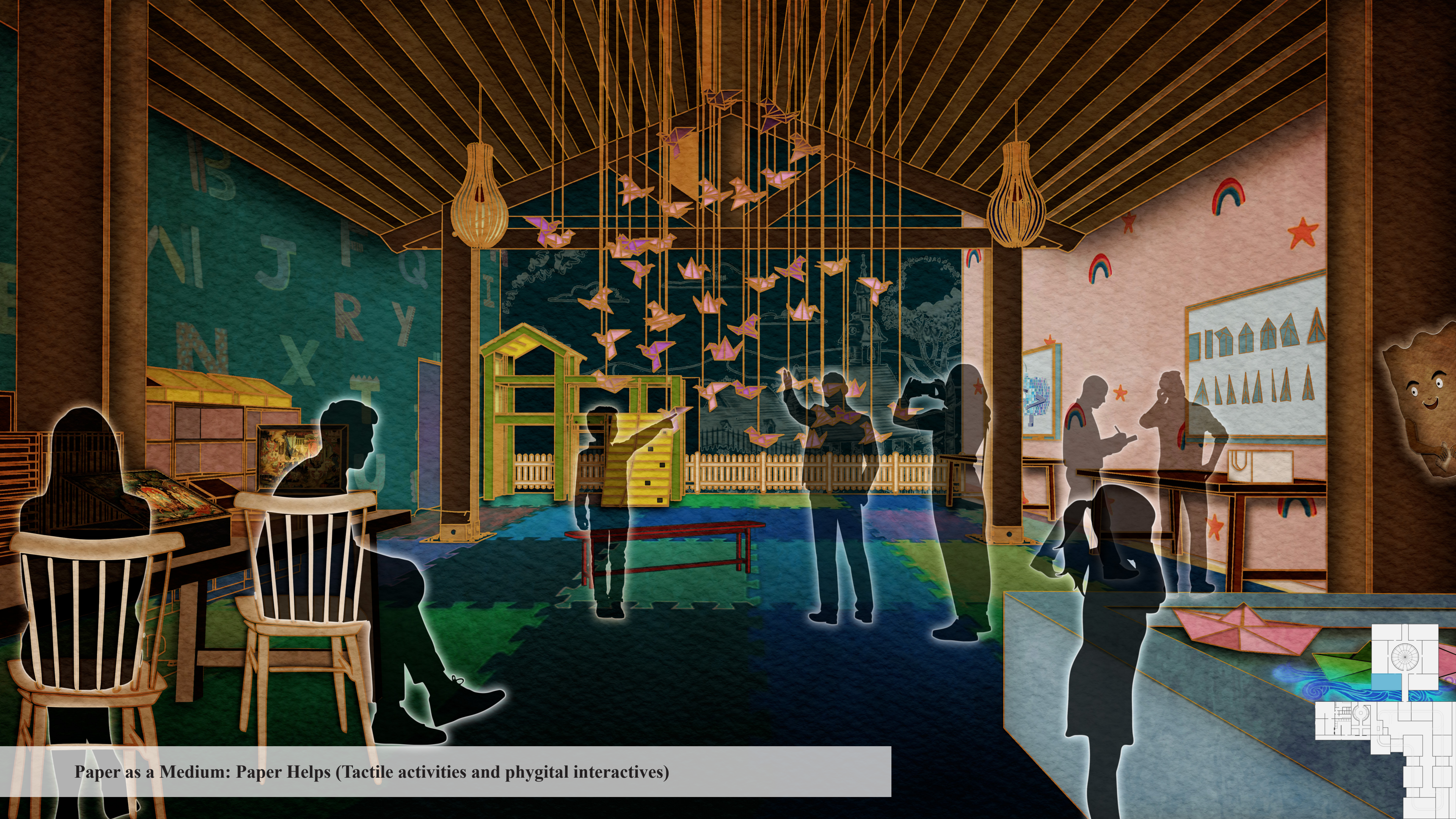


Paper as a Model (The finale where Cloud's fragmented memories must be collected by playing an interactive game)

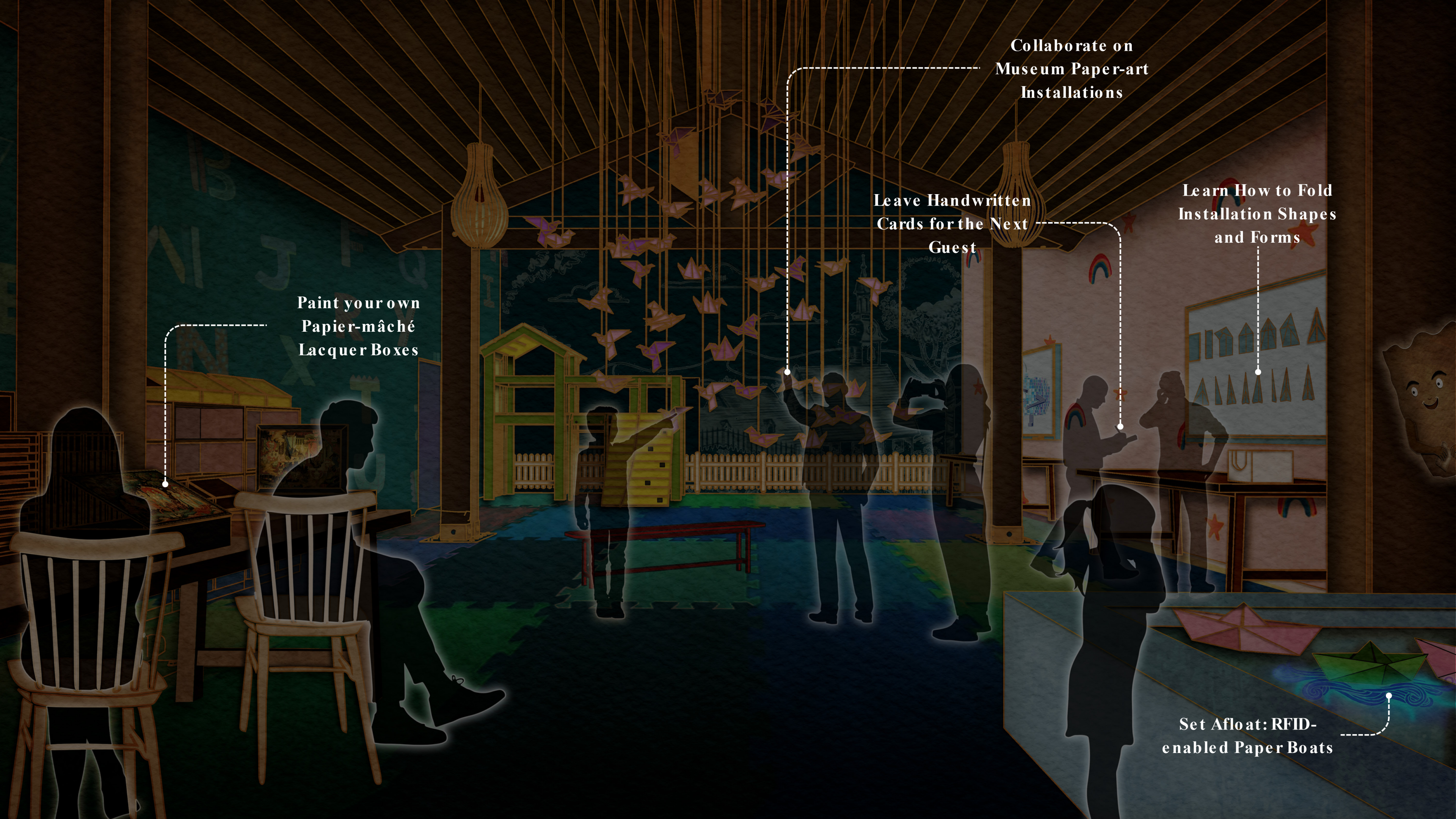


Paper as a Model (The finale once Cloud's fragmented memories are collected and Cloud is connected to Pixel)





Paper as a Medium: Paper Helps (Tactile activities and phygital interactives)



**Paint your own
Papier-mâché
Lacquer Boxes**



**Leave Handwritten
Cards for the Next
Guest**



**Learn How to Fold
Installation Shapes
and Forms**



**Set Afloat: RFID-
enabled Paper Boats**

**Collaborate on
Museum Paper-art
Installations**



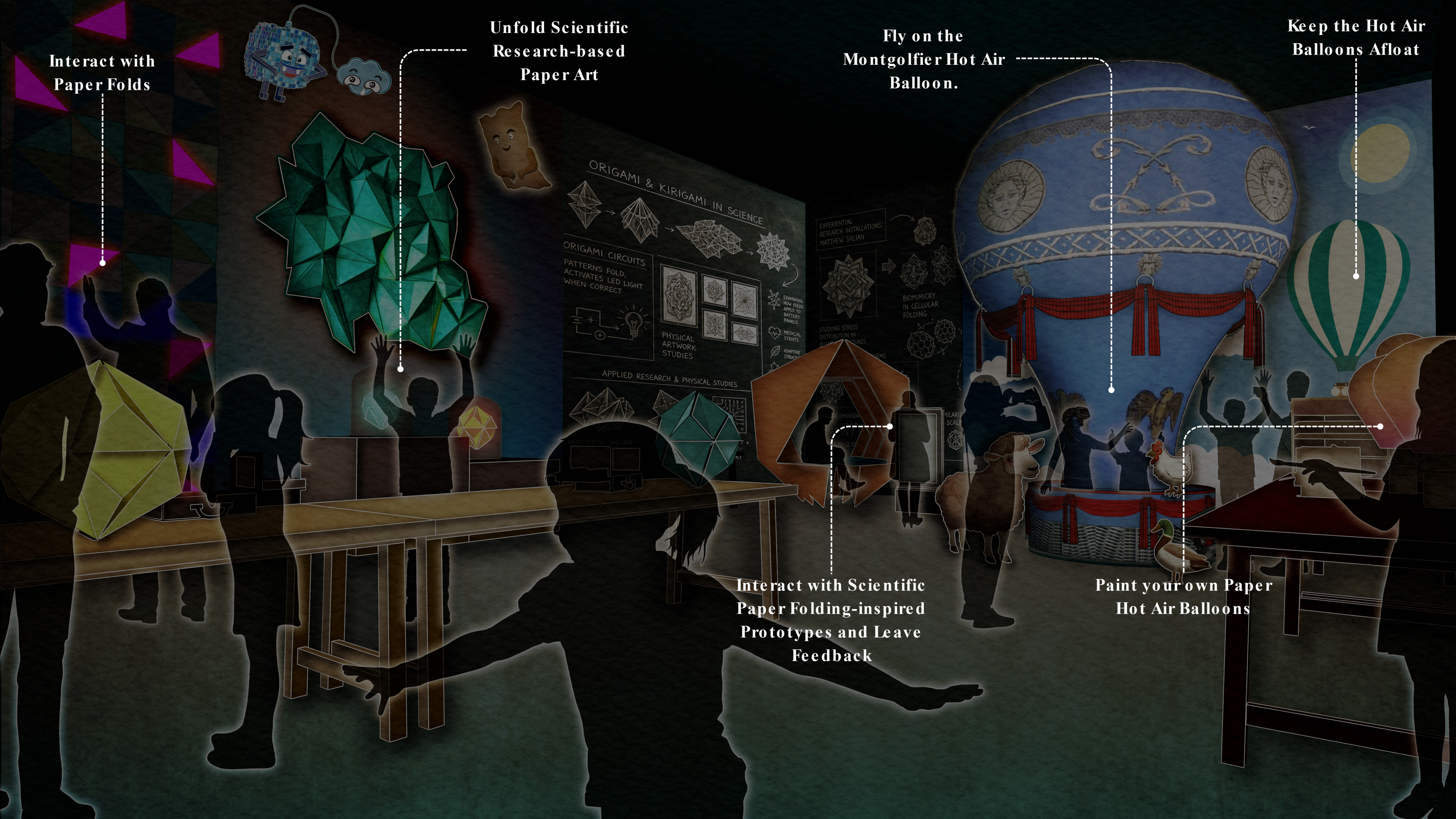
Paper as a Muse: Paper Experiments (Paper's influence in the field of science depicted through phygital interactives)

Interact with
Paper Folds

Unfold Scientific
Research-based
Paper Art

Fly on the
Montgolfier Hot Air
Balloon.

Keep the Hot Air
Balloons Afloat at



Interact with Scientific
Paper Folding-inspired
Prototypes and Leave
Feedback

Paint your own Paper
Hot Air Balloons

Conclusion

Phygital storytelling merges physical objects with digital technologies to **create emotionally resonant and interactive museum experiences**. Storytelling strengthens visitor-object relationships without compromising object authenticity or cultural integrity.

“Sheet Happens All the Time!” demonstrates how **ordinary materials like paper can become compelling narrative protagonists**. Other materials can also be transformed into immersive and emotionally engaging narratives.

Participatory and layered storytelling encourages curiosity, repeat visits, and deeper long-term engagement with museum collections.

The **adaptable nature of this strategy** allows museums to adapt and transform any room into interactive and immersive narrative.

Transforming the “ordinary” into the “extra-ordinary” creates **memorable and impactful museum experiences**.

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands of varying shades of green, ranging from a light sage green to a dark forest green. The bands curve upwards and to the right, creating a sense of movement and depth.

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