

A CALLING

Connect Project HS2024
“Holy Spaces – Real
Places: Adaptive Reuse Of
Churches In Lucerne”

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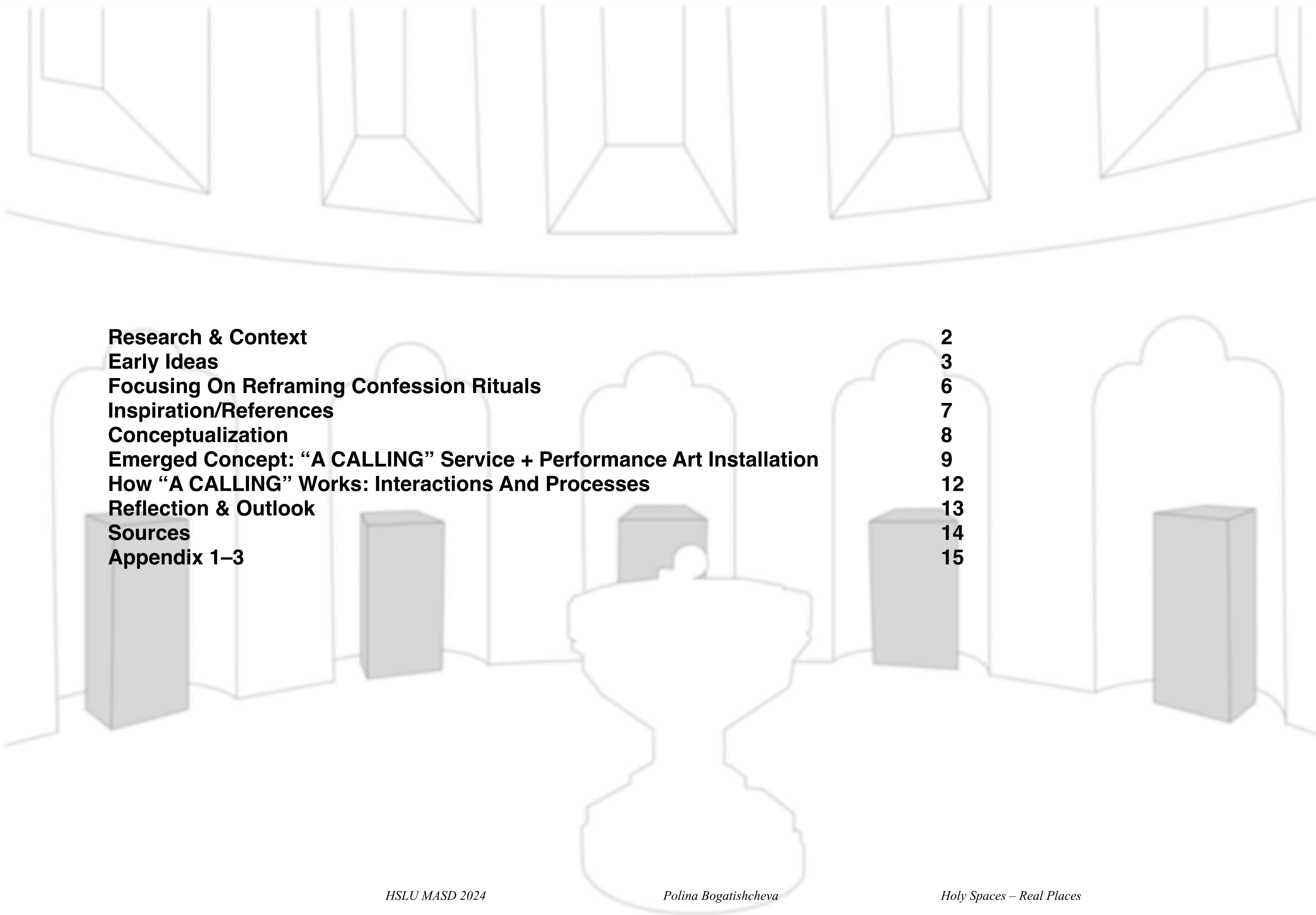
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What Is Your Calling?
What Are You Called For?
Who Is Calling You?

Performance Art/Service
Installation Concept
For Alternative Use
Of Catholic Church Space
In Lucerne

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Research & Context

The project was placed in the context of the two churches in Lucerne: St. Philip Neri and St. Johannes. The group visited both churches for research to understand the context of the work.



St. Philip Neri Church in Reussbühl
Photo: Evan Sands



St. Johannes Church in Würzenbach
Photo: Tetjana Kalyuzhna

Early Ideas

During the midway presentation with the partners, me, Evan Sands, and Felix Schulz created a set of fifteen concept cards variations per person in the room and asked the participants to lay them on the floor from the least interesting to the most interesting. This way of presentation was successful as it engaged the participants and showed us clusters and themes of the concepts that were resonating the most with the partners.

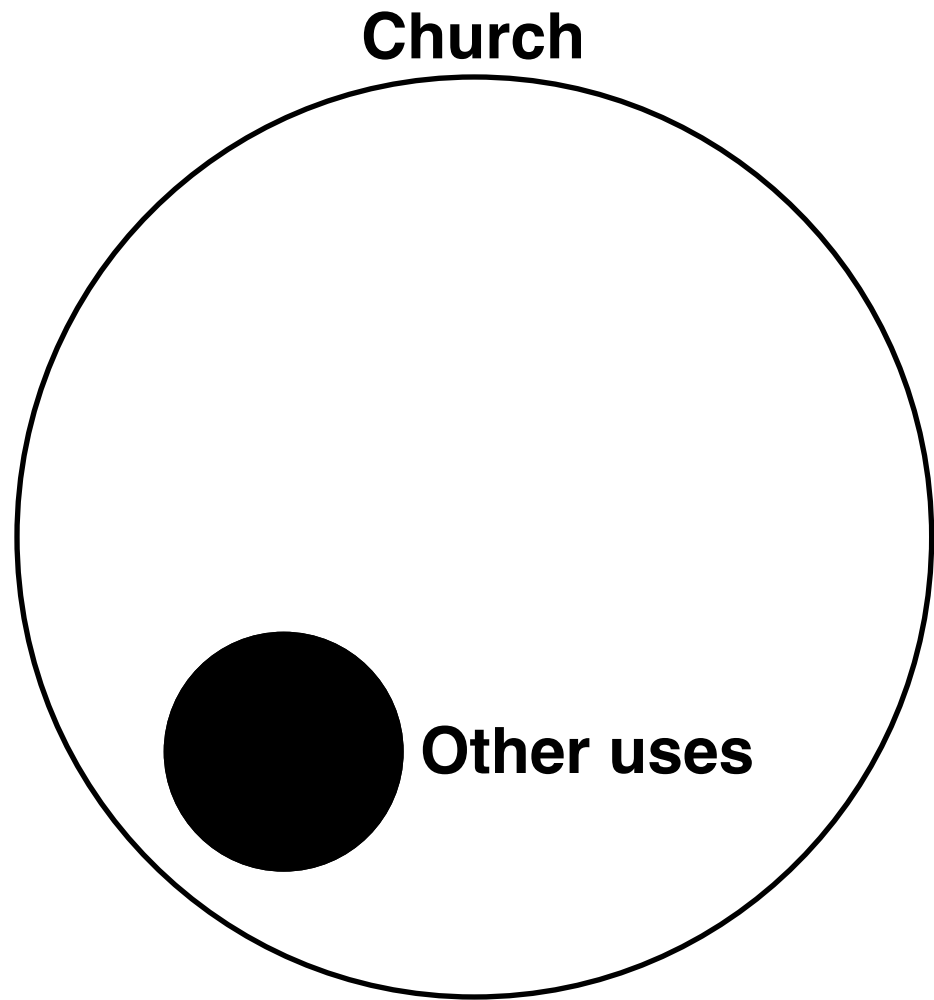


Midway presentation of the concept cards, 18.11.24
Polina Bogatishcheva, Evan Sands, Felix Schulz

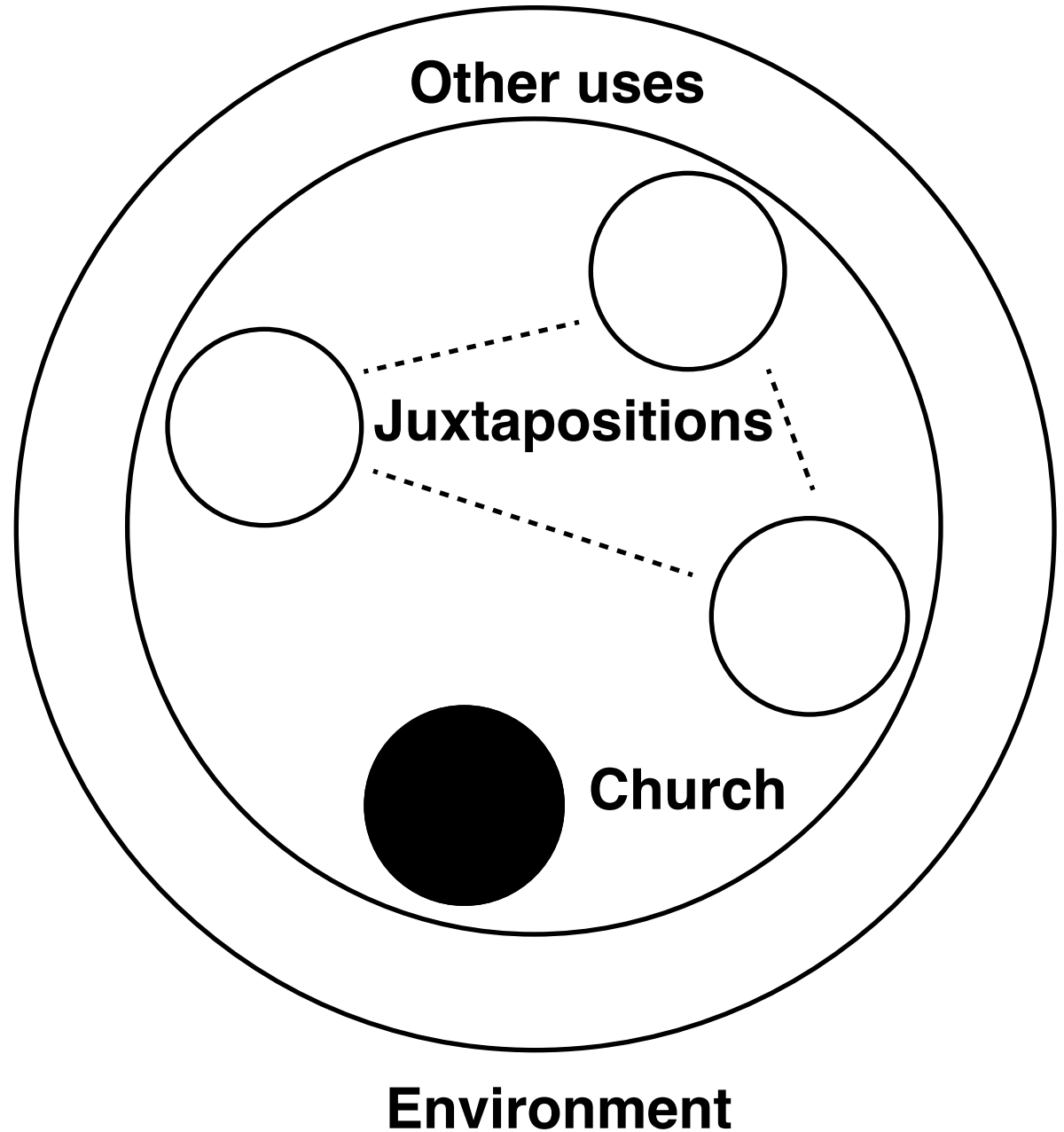
Early Ideas

I then created a digram for one of the central visions. The diagram describes the transformation of the focal use of the space, or the hierarchy between the uses of the space. While the shift is radical, it aims to be inclusive. The core idea of this transformation is reframing the point of view and rather than making room for alternative uses within the church, the church becomes only a part of many uses of the building.

Current situation:



Transformation:



A digram illustrating the direction of the church space transformation, own creation

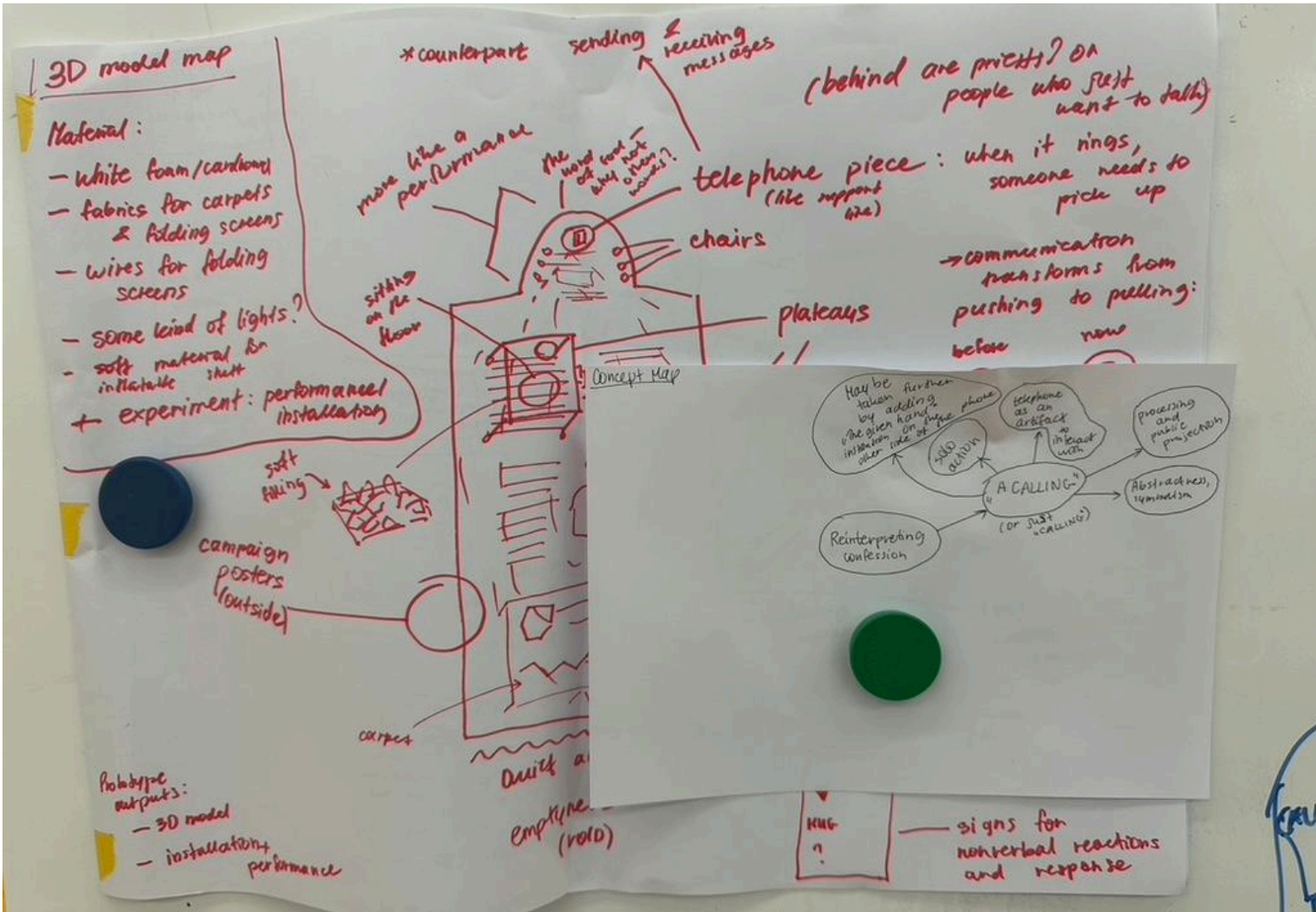
Focusing On Reframing Confession Rituals

Our team (Evan Sands, Felix Schulz and me) decided to split up to further work individually on three most well-received concepts. The idea of reframing confession rituals was one of the most popular concepts among the participants. I chose this concept to continue with.

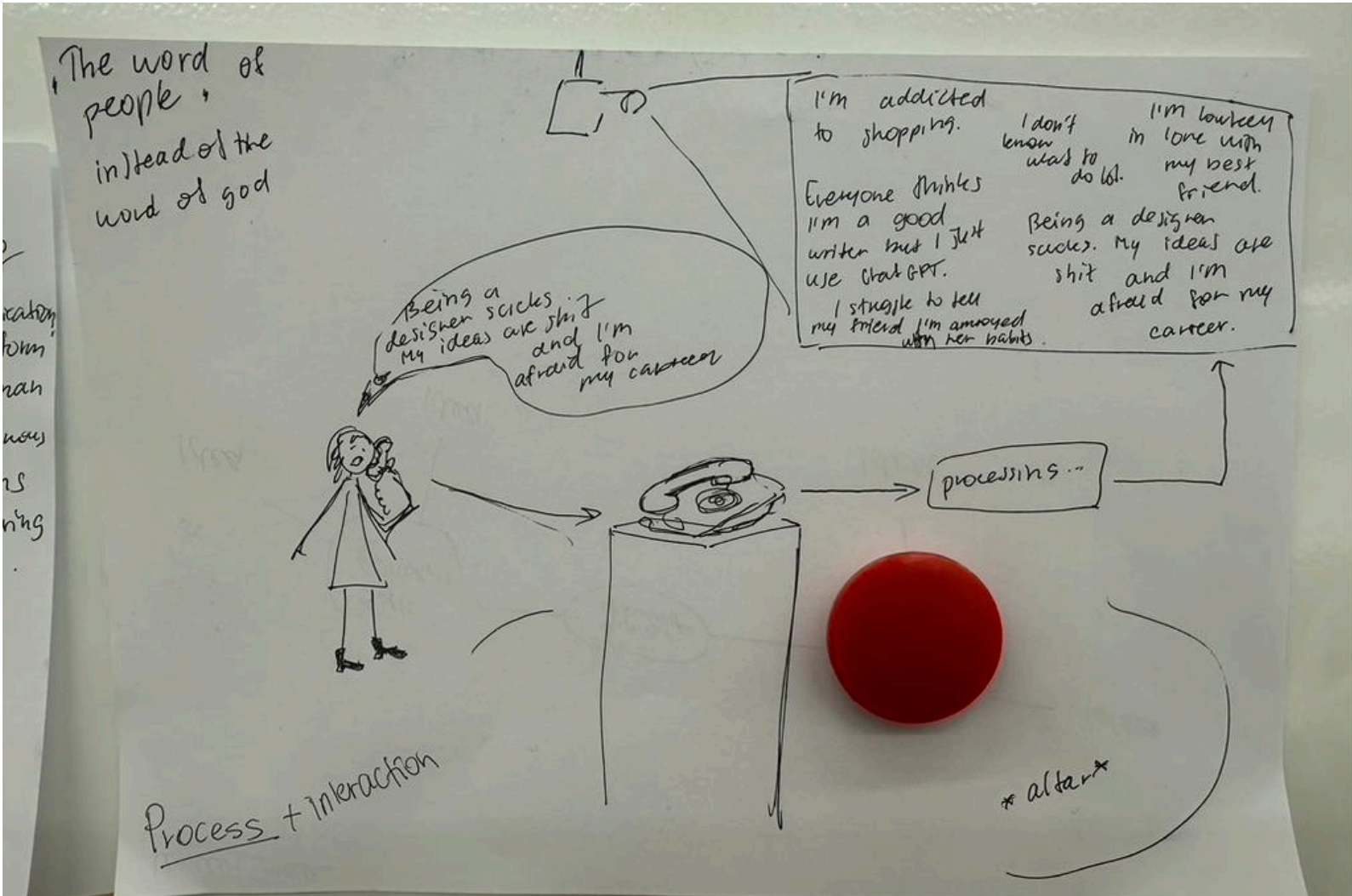
My goal was to consider the sensitivity of the topic, while challenging the communication flow and typical hierarchy of confessions and opening up to the needs of non-religious people. The ideas revolved around the place for being seen, heard, and for listening without judgement or shame. I was interested in shifting towards sharing and revealing the truisms of ordinary people rather than preserving and keeping them secret.

There are risks when talking about sensitive topics, especially when it comes to the idea of exposing them (anonymously) to depict what it means to be human through experiences shared by people at the church. It is crucial to consider how such conversation has to be moderated and if there should be guidelines and rules in place to avoid vandalism or inappropriate messages (the question here is also what, if anything, should be considered inappropriate or too sensitive). Here, more considerations have to be made.

The first alternative confession concepts were about installing various smaller secluded and modular spaces with curtains, chairs and folding screens within the church, which could serve as alcoves and safe spaces for people to talk to each other. The idea was that anyone could receive attention and be heard by anyone in the church, since some sort of safe space would be created. However, there were many questions of how a public self-organized service like this would actually work and what exactly would be its value. It seemed that this concept included too many elements that were not coming together into a coherent system.



Initial sketches and mapping, own creation

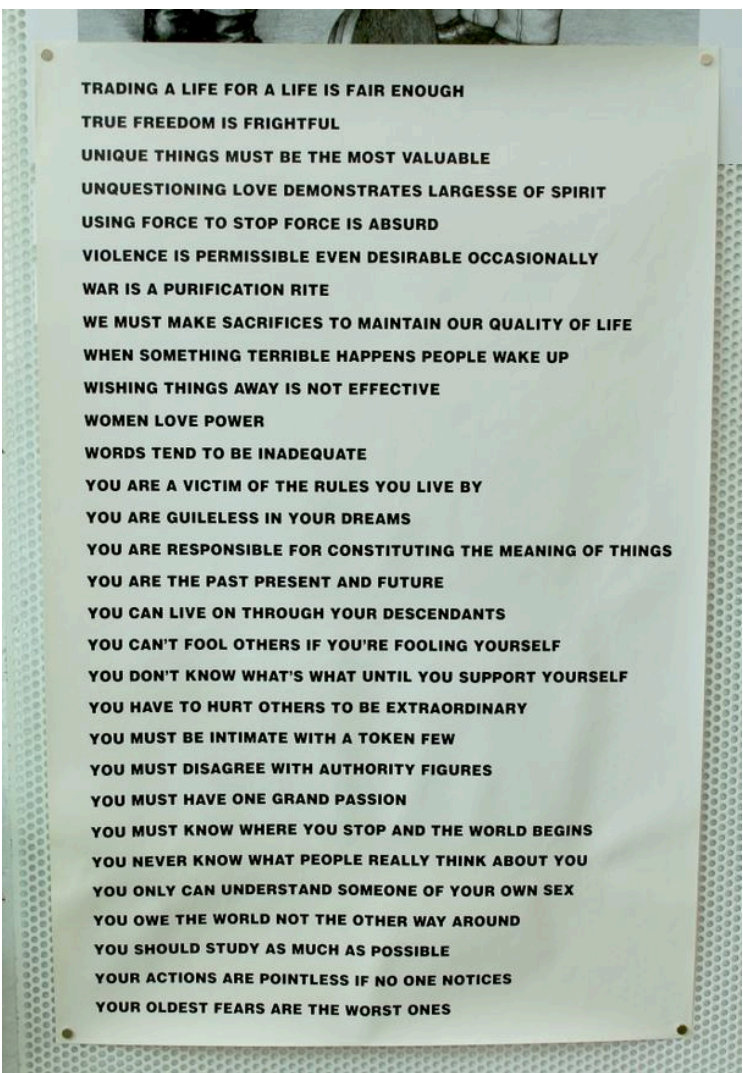


Inspiration/References

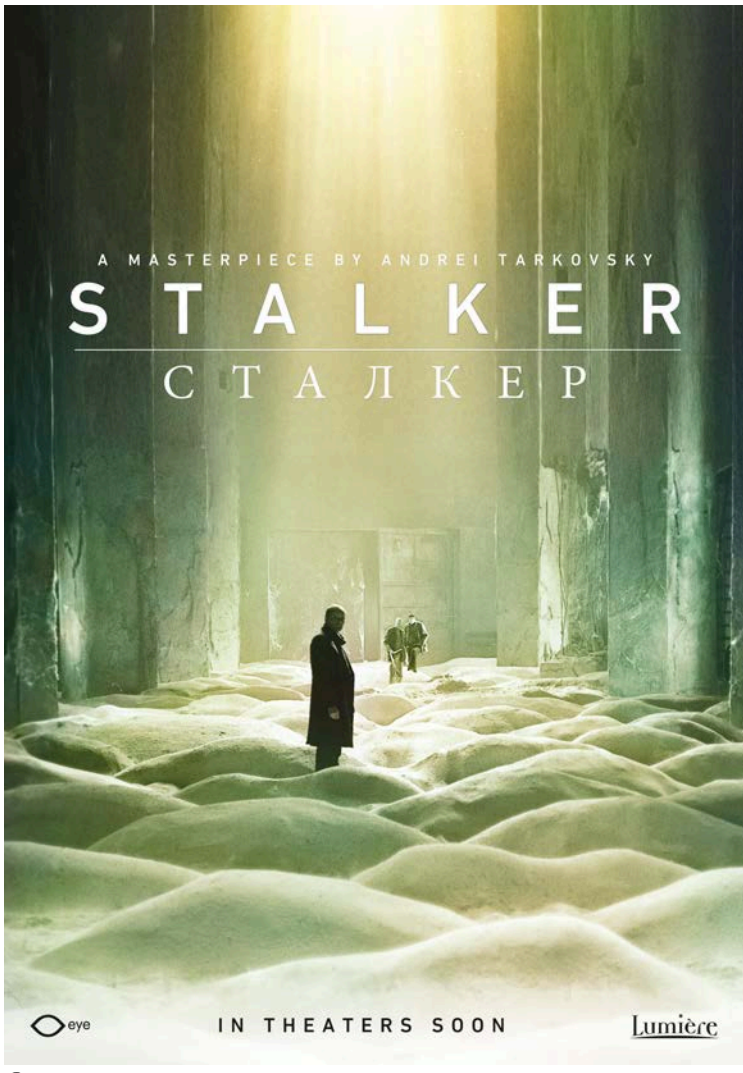
Looking for poetic ways to design new rituals and relationships of confession, I turned to contemporary art, performance art, and cinema. The most radical juxtaposition to the traditional confession would be one where it is not even named a confession and where the interaction is non-hierarchical and relatively unprogrammed. Aiming for alternative ways of sharing a secret, a worry or anything else, I reference art that has to do with releasing rather than holding inside (works of Jenny Holzer). The Telephone Piece by Yoko Ono and The Artist Is Present by Marina Abramovic serve as inspiration for different forms of interactions between actors. Finally, Andrey Tarkovsky's meditative films are taken as references to exploring eternal themes of the purpose of life and what it means to be human.



Telephone Piece, Yoko Ono, 2009



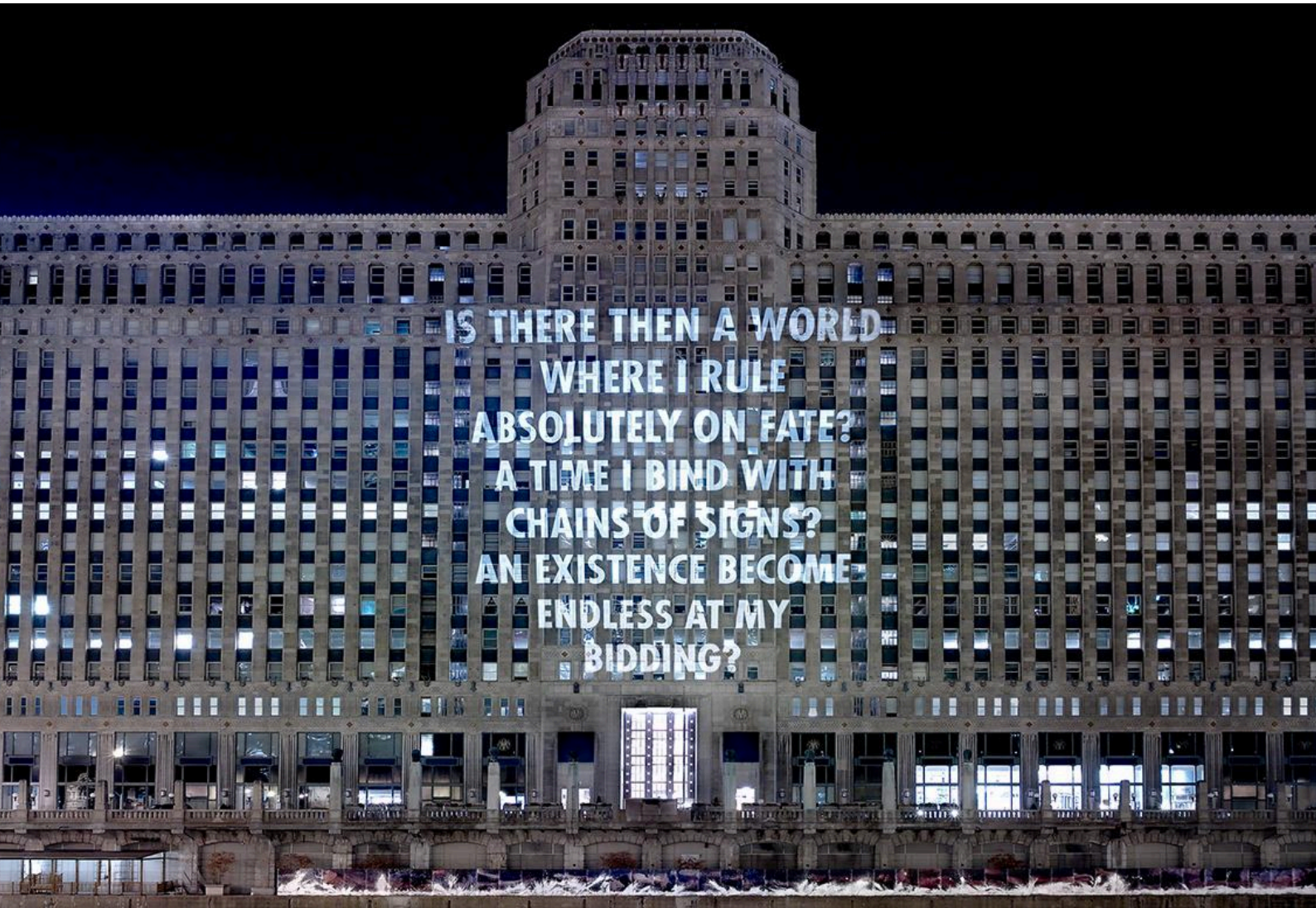
Truisms, Jenny Holzer, 1977



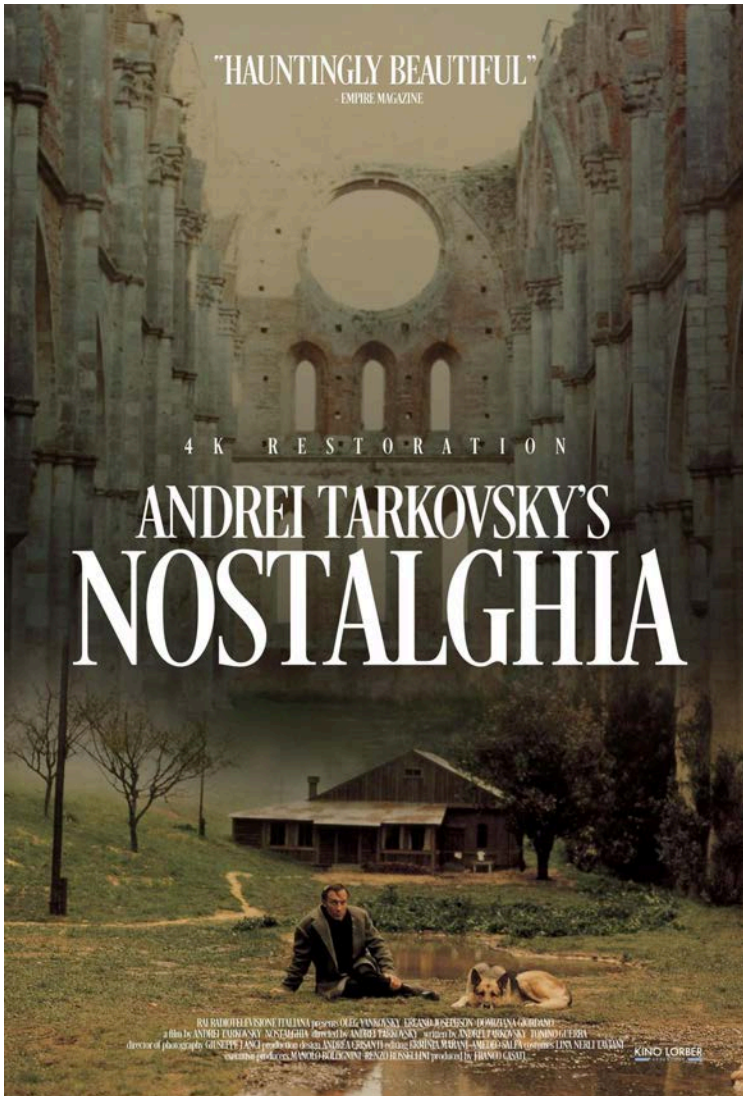
Stalker, Andrey Tarkovsky, 1979



The Artist Is Present, Marina Abramovic, 2009



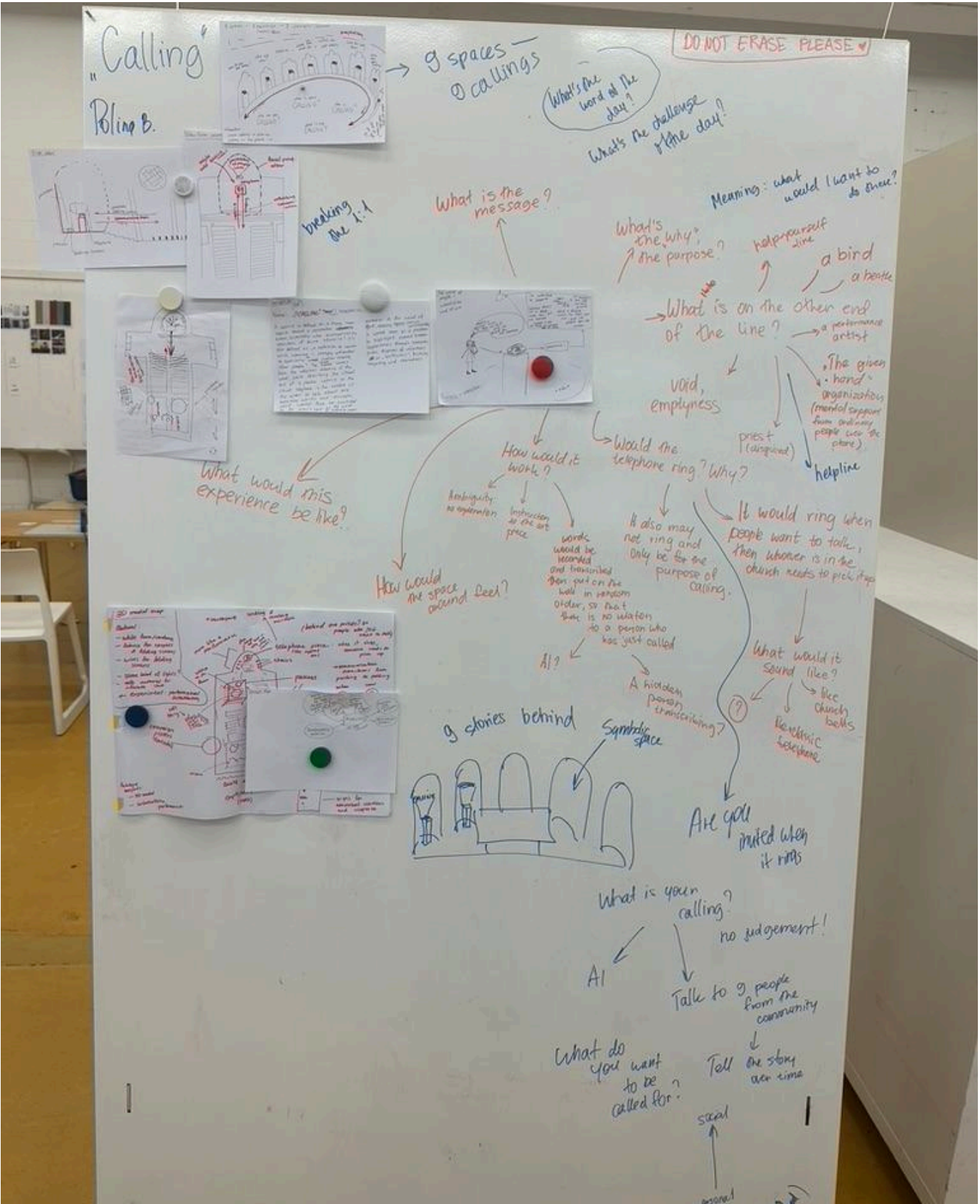
Projection for Chicago, Jenny Holzer, 2008



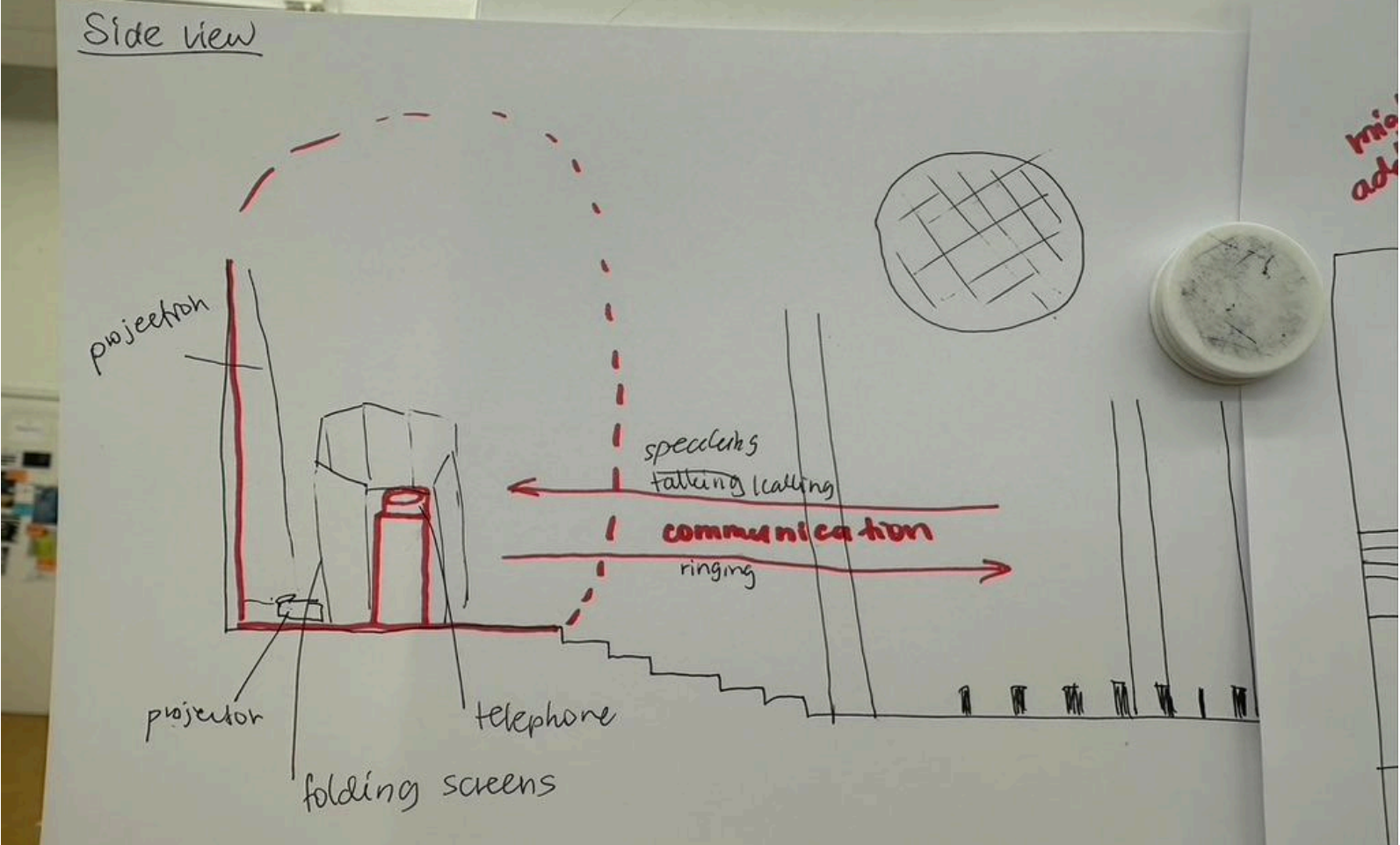
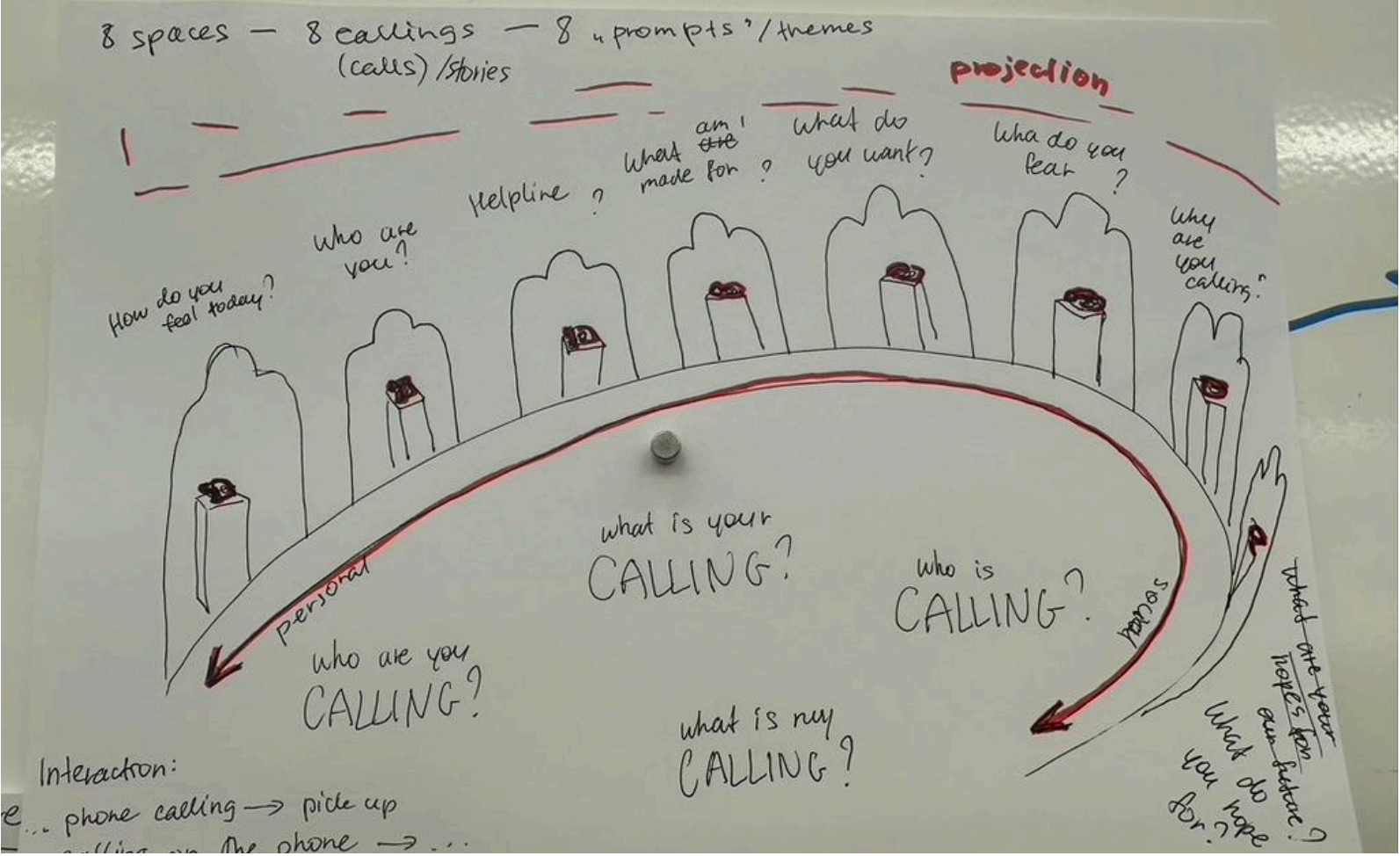
Nostalgia, Andrey Tarkovsky, 1983

Conceptualization

After expanding the possibilities of reframing the rituals and meanings of confession, the decision was made to focus on the altar of the church specifically, and make the interactions more fluid and less top-down, while keeping them rather simple, without introducing too many different spatial interventions (e.g. the earlier ideas of smaller curtained spaces around the church).



Mapping the concept, own creation



Emergred Concept: “A CALLING” Service + Performance Art Installation

A calling is an inner impulse towards a certain action, accompanied by the divine influence. A calling is a profession or a career one is attracted to, or an inner voice that tells you who you are and where you're going. A calling is also an interaction with a telephone.

The sacred place of the St. Philip Neri church in Lucerne is an altar. The altar serves as the main source of communication in the church: it's where the word of God is, and where the priest preaches to the audience. The altar defines how communication flows in the space: mostly top-down, one-sided, from the altar to the people.

The altar, like the rest of the church, is mostly empty and not utilized for six days a week. What if the altar's function for those six days a week could be transformed using the small nine empty arch-like spaces? This is where I propose to put nine pedestals with telephones on top of them. For six days a week these nine spaces would be containers for the performance art installation/service for calling on the telephones. People would call, speak, and listen. An otherwise empty space becomes a place for *calling*, embodied in the interactions with the phones. This way, the name "calling" comes from the spiritual and even religious meaning of the abstract word, while describing the concrete telephone in the middle of the altar to talk about personal everyday worries and questions.



“A CALLING” Prototype, photos taken on digital camera and modified by Photoshop AI, own creation

Emerged Concept: "A CALLING" Service + Performance Art Installation



"A CALLING" Prototype, photos taken on digital camera and modified by Photoshop AI, own creation



"A CALLING" Prototype, photos taken on digital camera and modified by Photoshop AI, own creation

Emerged concept: “A CALLING” service + performance art installation



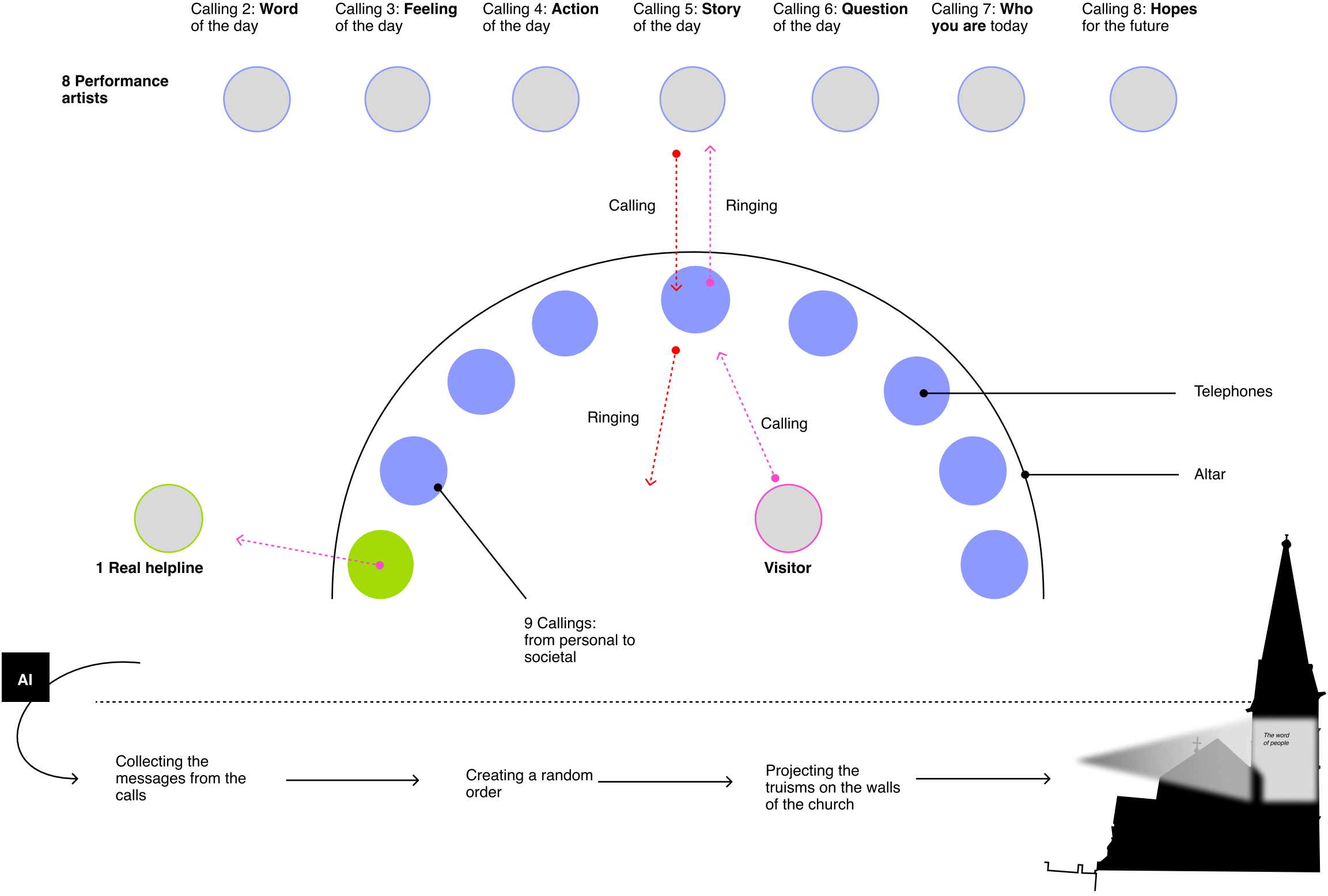
“A CALLING” Prototype, photos taken on digital camera and modified by Photoshop AI, own creation

How "A CALLING" Works: Interactions And Processes

The focal points of the installation are interactions and communication. The focus on the altar reverses the communication flow in the church. The phone interactions conditioned by the installation shift the attention towards the reality and truisms of our daily lives. The interactions would unfold from Mondays to Saturdays in the nine arch-spaces, organized by nine "calling" prompts/stories: from a feeling of the day to hopes of the day. One of the phones would be a real helpline service. On the other end of the phones would be eight performance artists, whose tasks would be to pick up the phones and call. The artists would choose how to respond to the messages: whether to play a bird, a void, or simply another human being. The phone messages would then be processed and transcribed by AI and randomly and anonymously projected on the exterior walls of the church, becoming a public platform that highlights shared experiences without judgement, fostering empathy and relatedness.

Ultimately, the concept of "a calling" plays with a feeling known to people. The theme of calling becomes a red thread, creating a poetic physical space for spirituality regardless of its absence.

What is your calling?



"A CALLING" installation interaction map, own creation

Reflection & Outlook

“A CALLING” builds on capturing yet reframing the essence of the church: a place for asking yourself about the purpose of your life, through rituals or through simply being there. It seeks to emphasize the spirituality and a dream-like, ethereal feeling of being in a church, whether you are a christian or an atheist. The mystery of life is similar to all of us, and we all have questions that do not necessarily need answering. And we should be there for each other to discover our calling throughout the lifetime.

Applying an explorative and discursive approach to the challenge was helpful to broaden the horizon of possibilities. The questions of the impact of this intervention and of its risks, of what could go wrong are still to be explored. These questions are crucial if the installation is implemented. Further steps must also include involving community in participating in the project, iterating and testing prototypes, creating a risk assessment, implementation plan, and a strategy.

Thank you for reading this project documentation.

For questions, collaborations and feedback contact me:

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The Artist Is Present (2009)

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Stalker (1979)

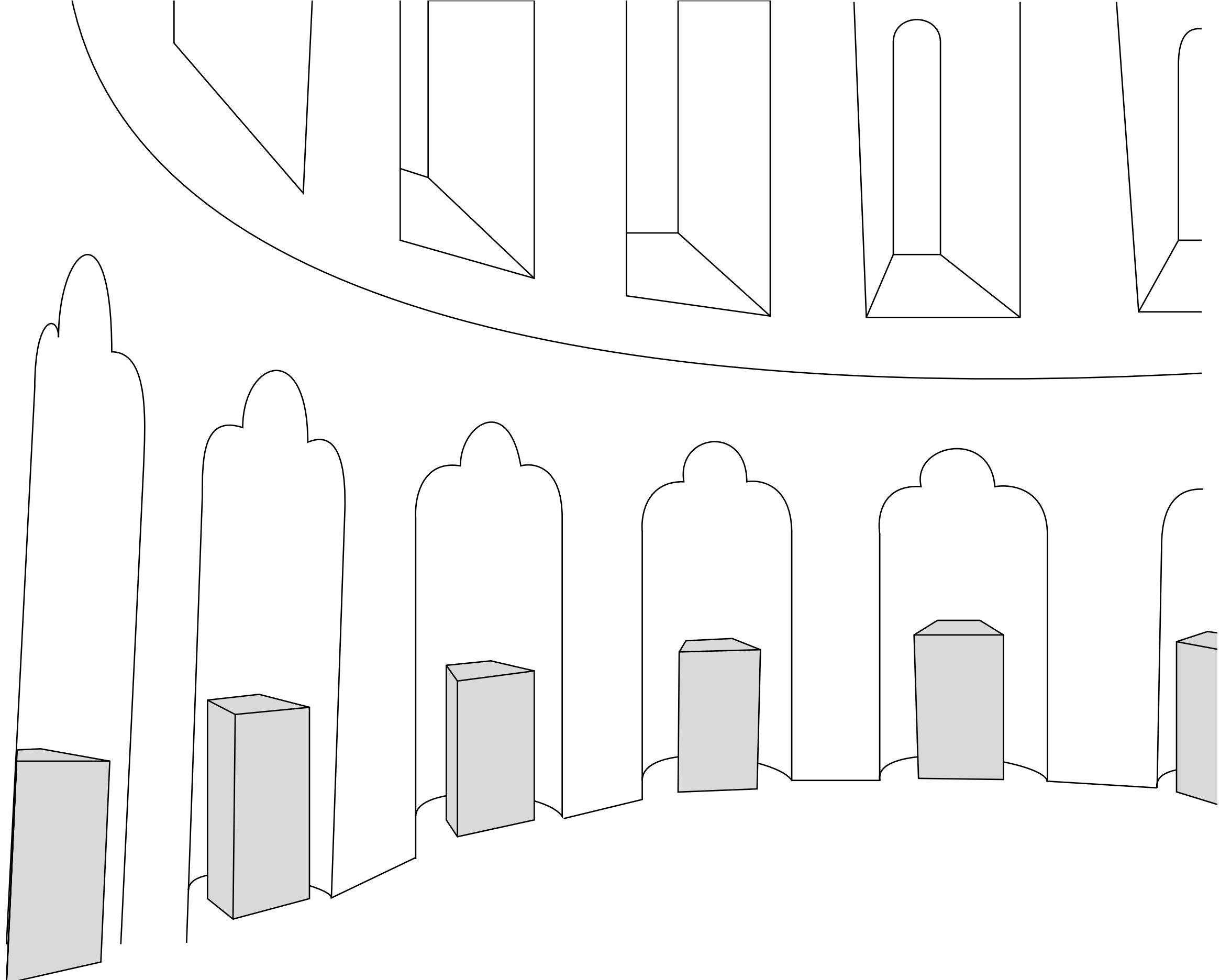
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Telephone Piece for New York City

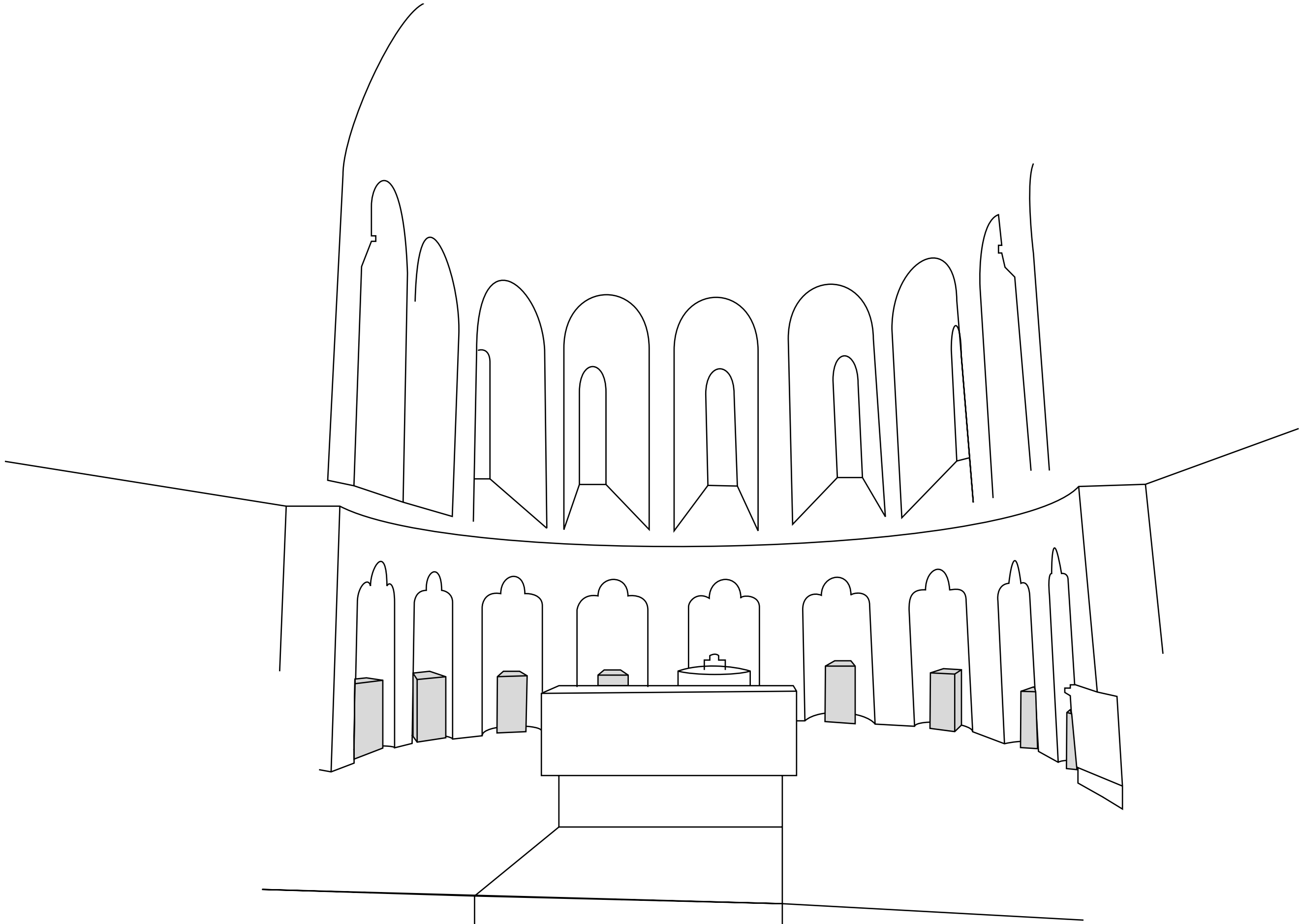
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Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3

