**REBECCA HUI** 

### A SLUM CALLED HOLLYWOOD | Gulbai Tekra-Ahmedabad, India









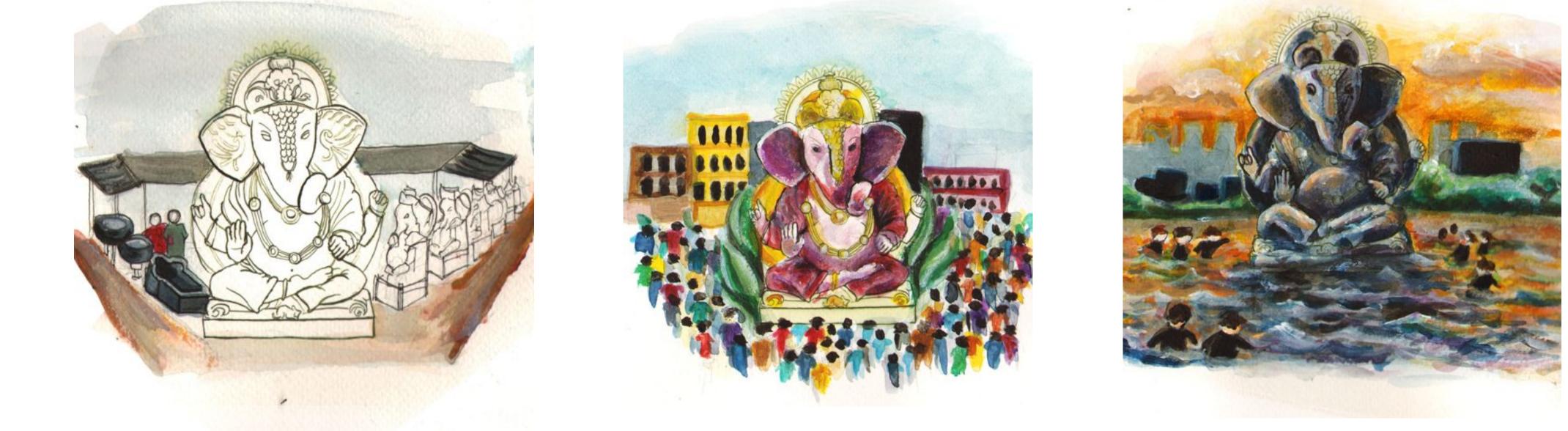
I first stumbled upon "Hollywood" when I got lost on a rickshaw in Ahmedabad, India. The things I noticed first were typical of your gawky foreigner: tents made out of corrugated metal, livestock frolicking about, and half naked children running around. What struck me most were the infinite stacks of elephant statues lined up on the street. But the sight of the slum was a strange contrast against the bordering commercial districts and the luxury cars that honked through the slum. When I asked my friends about the slum, they told me locals called it "Hollywood," but was formally called Gulbai Tekra. I am not entirely sure the story behind the name "Hollywood", but my theory is that the sight of this slum is so contrasting against the two commercial districts nearby that it appears to be a painted set-up you would only find in Hollywood.

I returned regularly to learn more about the Gulbai Tekra. Gulbai Tekra's sustenance revolved around building elephant statues resembling the Hindu god, Ganesh. Employment? Making Ganesh. Religion? Worshipping Ganesh. Education? How to make Ganesh. Dwellers produce 30,000 Ganeshes per year, sell them for 90 USD, and make 23 USD in profit. Labor wages are set at 5.60 USD per statue and statues are formed out of Plaster of Paris mixed with coconut fiber. The community was mostly comprised of immigrants from the rural villages of Rajasthan, a state in northern India.

Despite Gulbai Tekra's flourishing community and activities, general perception was quite negative and many felt that the area needed to be "cleaned-up" (quoted by comments on a forum). On the other end, slum dwellers shared with me the government's efforts to evict them due to the environmental hazards the traditions surrounding the celebration of Ganesh cause. Every year in September, thousands will immerse Ganesh statues into the water bodies of India to celeberate the creation and destruction of life. Unfortunately, the ritual consequently releases whopping amounts of toxins when the statues dissolve. While environmental consciousness is a priority, I felt there were greater reasons beyond this for such a severe eviction. I also came to learn there were plans to widen the streets when I saw red arrows drawn on the walls of houses, which marked the extent by which the street will be widened to. I was haunted by one dweller's statement, "In 2 months, my house will become a bus stop".

Driven by the urgency of the slum's removal, I was convicted to record the dwellers' stories. I created a questionnaire to learn about each dweller's background and story. I was also interested in abstracting notions of "happiness," and executed this by asking the dwellers to give me a number from 1-10 that reflects their happiness. Based on that number, I gave them that number of flowers and photographed them. I also surveyed perceivably higher-income individuals found in the commercial streets near Gulbai Tekra, and proceeded to "map happiness" across the different income groups. Through these ethnographic interviews, I hoped to gain an empathetic point of view to the priorities that shaped the inhabitants of the slum, and the perspectives of strangers outside the slum.





### MAPPING HAPPINESS

#### "PICK A NUMBER BETWEEN 1-10 TO RATE HOW HAPPY YOU ARE"











HIGHLY UNSANITARY



Red arrows in slum dwellers' homes mark the

A celeberation of the slum's culture may

extent in which their houses will be destroyed.

convince the greater community of its values.

EVICTIONS



TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Slum dwellers ebb in and out according to the

traffic levels, an unsafe habit that is perceived

as a nuisance to commuters.



















MAIN PLAZA



To evade the reason for eviction, the most obvious priority is to find substitutes to current statue-making materials and ensure that the

process is environmentally friendly. Solutions:

1. Use unbaked natural clay 2. Produce stone-based reúsable statues 3. Use paper-mache

Solutions: 1. Animal corrals 2. Canted elevation to drain rain water 3. Underground water collection system

There is no sewer and animals are allowed to

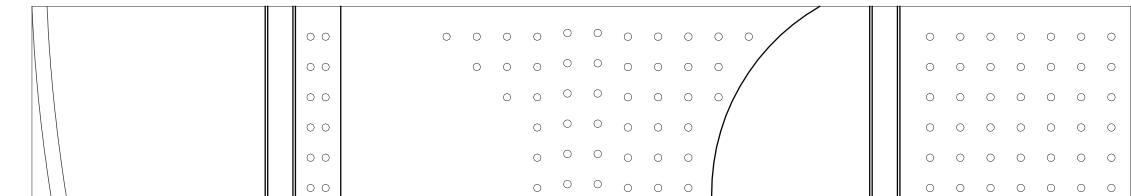
run rampant, causing piling of fecal matter

diseases.

and frequent outbreaks of sanitation-related

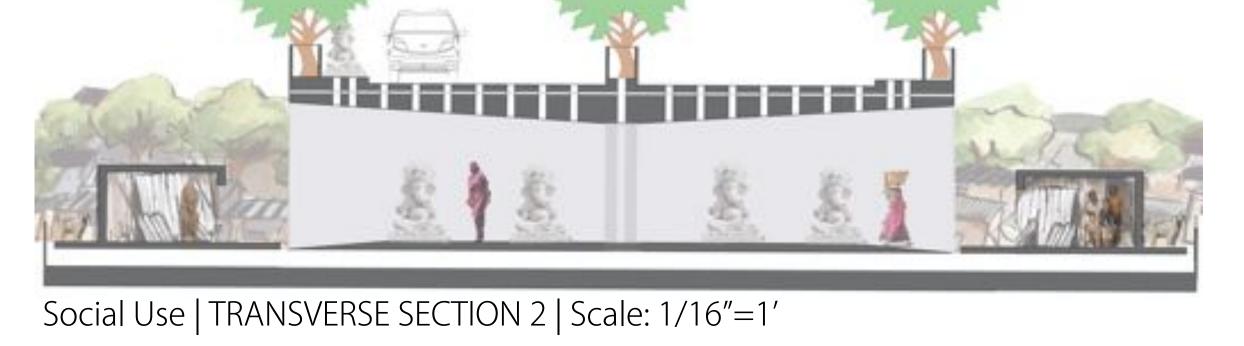
Solutions: Solutions: Economic Vitality: Turn the main street into a celebratory market place and opportunity for economic vibrancy
Elevate the street to allow through traffic, alternate the elevation to destroy duopoly driving classes and dwellers

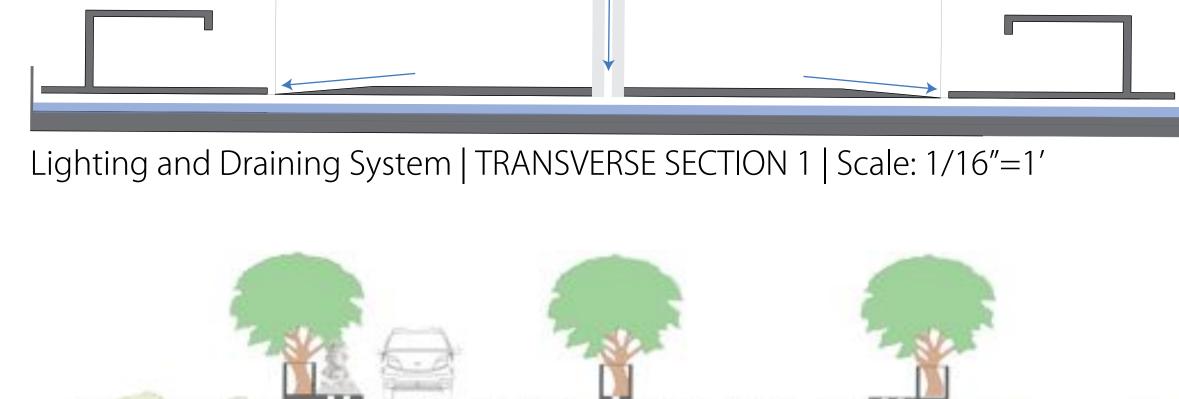
2. Cultural Vibrancy: Allow the market place to be an open canvas for the community of artists

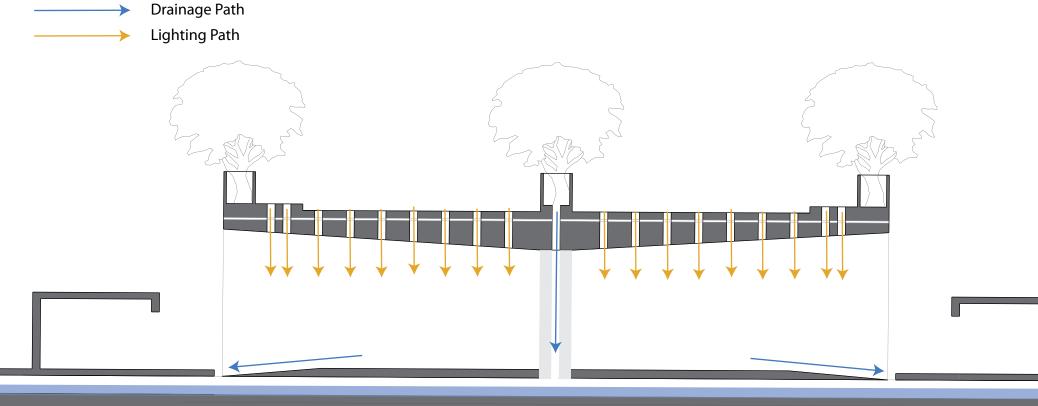


Plaza Cut | TRANSVERSE SECTION 3 | Scale: 1/16"=1'



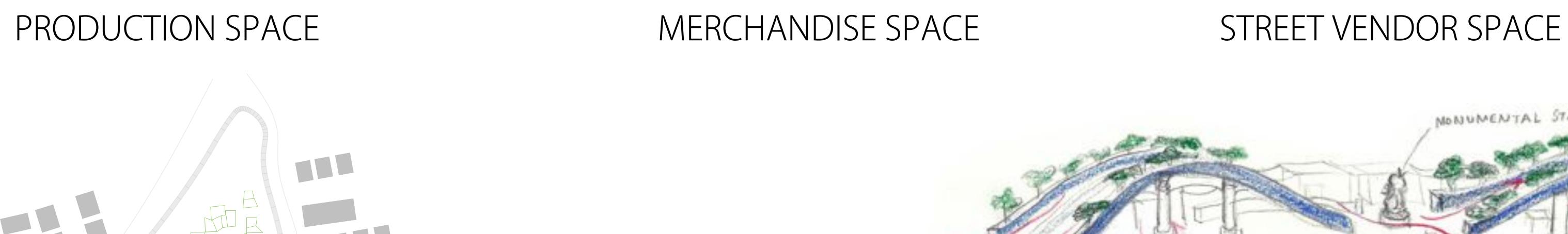


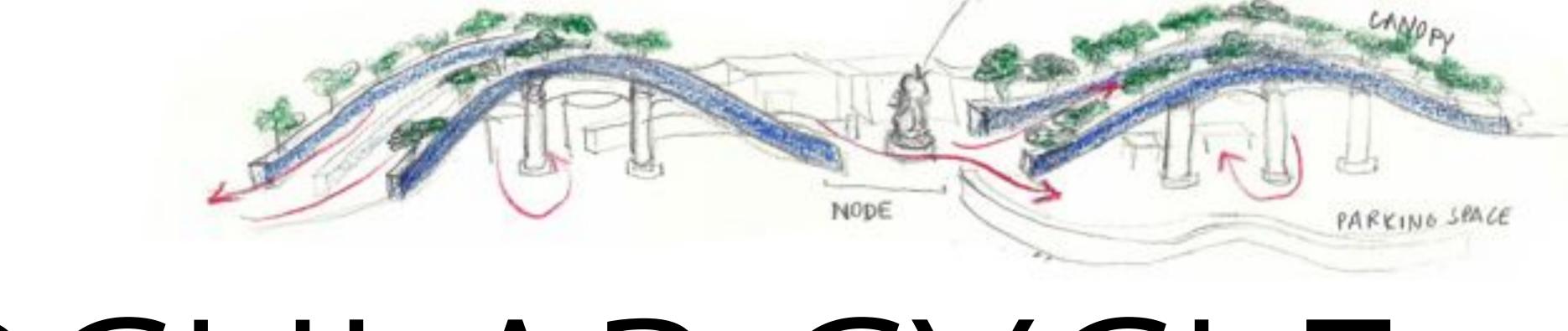






LONGITUDINAL SECTION | Scale: 1/16"=1'

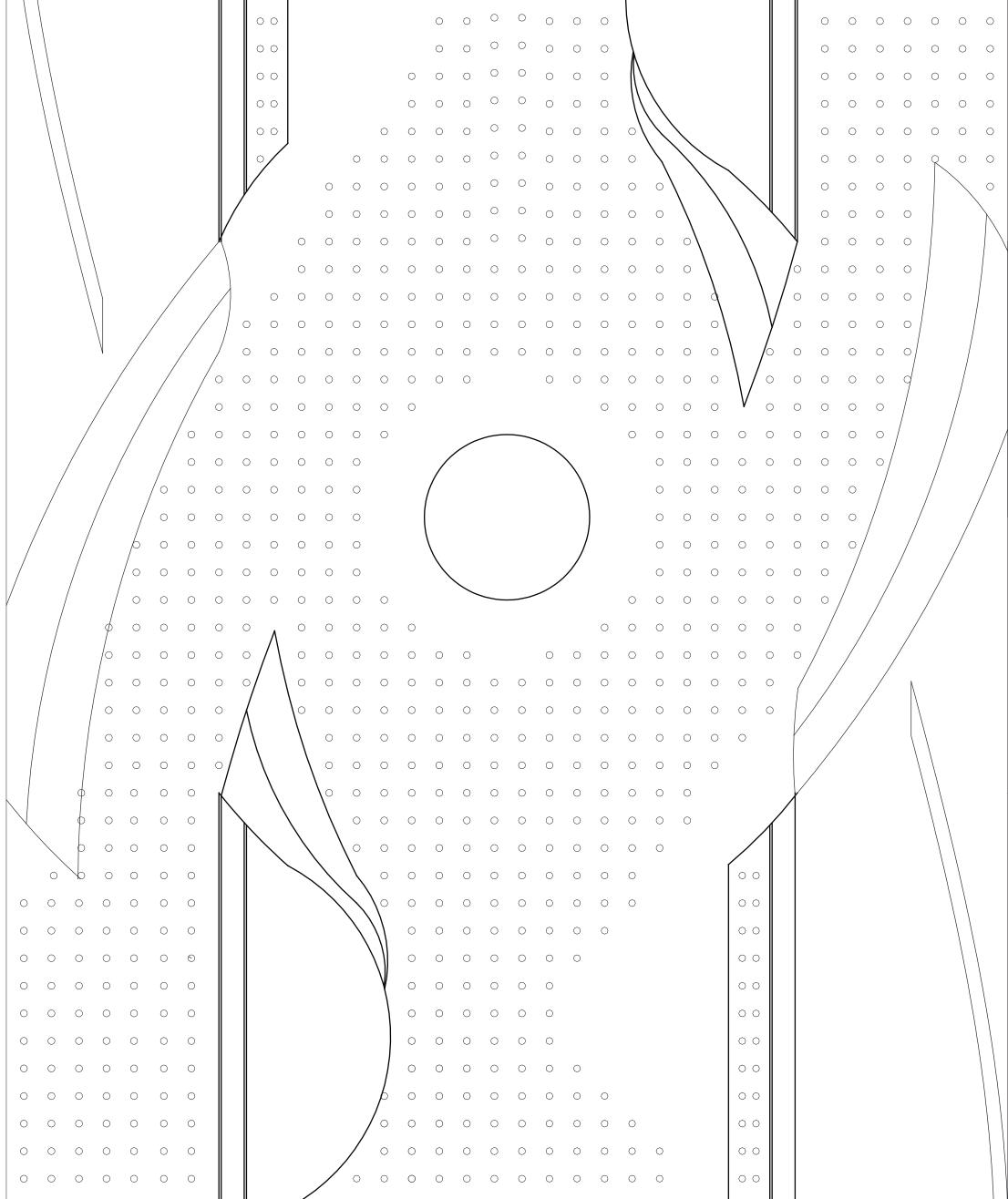




MONUMENTAL STATE

## CIRCULARCYCLE





# PLAN VIEW | MACRO Happiness Map Evictions Climate Climate Job



Circular Node | PLAN VIEW | Scale: 1/16"= 1'