

WINTERSEMESTER 2025/26

SEMINAR

MASTER

EINFÜHRUNG UND ERSTE SITZUNG
17. OKTOBER 2025

11:00—17:00

24. OKTOBER
07. NOVEMBER
21. NOVEMBER
05. DEZEMBER

11:00—17:00

SEMINARRAUM
(L3|01 110)

OPPRESSED FANTASIES LIBERATORY CONSTRUCTIONS ANNA KOSTREVA

This block seminar will investigate architecture and artworks for their potentials to comment, critique and enact alternative worlds. To what extent can architecture support struggles for emancipation and human rights? We will discuss architects, writers, activists, and mythical characters such as Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lordé, Rosa Luxemburg, and Pandora. Students will participate in a collaborative world-building project that ties critical thinking and literary development into architectural drawings. The course is organised as a series of full day workshops, in which there will be time for collective study and production. These exercises, experiments and collective methods for textural and visual material will serve as tools for praxis that integrates theory and technical expertise in architecture.

Dieses Blockseminar untersucht Architektur und Kunstwerke im Hinblick auf ihr Potenzial, alternative Welten zu kommentieren, zu hinterfragen und erfahrbar zu machen. In welchem Maße kann Architektur emanzipatorische Prozesse und Menschenrechtsbewegungen unterstützen? Wir beschäftigen uns mit Architekt:innen, Autor:innen, Aktivist:innen und mythischen Figuren wie Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lorde, Rosa Luxemburg und Pandora. Die Teilnehmer:innen erarbeiten einem kollaborativen Worldbuilding-Projekt, in der kritisches Denken und literarische Entwicklung in architektonische Zeichnungen übersetzt werden. Das Seminar ist als Reihe ganztägiger Workshops organisiert, die Raum für gemeinsames Studium und gestalterische Produktion bieten. Die Übungen, Experimente und kollektiven Methoden zum Umgang mit textuellem und visuellem Material dienen als Werkzeuge für eine Praxis, die Theorie und architektonisch-technisches Wissen miteinander verknüpft.

Oppressed Fantasies Liberatory Constructions

Response to *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth*
by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer
Collated for <https://womenwritingarchitecture.org>

This student project responds to Inanna as a figure to inspire liberatory constructions. The starting point for the research was story of “Inanna and the God of Wisdom” as well as “The Descent of Inanna” from the 1983 book *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth* by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer. The projects are from the Masters of Architecture Theory Seminar *Oppressed Fantasies, Liberatory Constructions* led by Anna Kostreva. It took place at TU-Darmstadt in the department of Architectural Theory and Science (Architekturtheorie und -wissenschaft / ATW) during the Winter Semester of 2025. The student projects are published as annotations to citations from the course collection on <https://womenwritingarchitecture.org>.

The seminar investigated architecture and artworks for their potentials to comment, critique and enact alternative worlds. To what extent can architecture support struggles for emancipation and human rights? We discussed architects, writers, activists, and mythical characters such as Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Phyllis Birkby, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lorde, Rosa Luxemburg, and Pandora. Students participated in a collaborative world-building project that tied critical thinking and literary development into architectural drawings. The course was organised as a series of full day workshops, in which there was time for collective study and production. The exercises, experiments and collective methods for textural and visual material served as tools for a praxis that integrates theory and technical expertise in architecture.

Echoes

A fictional narrative of
divinity, theater, and architectural space

Xiangyue Lu

I recline on a Cherry wood chair woven with gold-thread patterns, flipping through the archives of temporal processes. The farce of the mortal world has never ceased. I have been summoned, and I have been forgotten.

My holy city has turned into ruins - broken pottery shards and charred bricks lie buried beneath the temple steps. Dust covers her name. My people still come to me for help:

At first they sought my power, offering sacrifices, building temples.

Later they sought only my name, embellishing my stories into shapes they needed, using my name to spread the ideas they wished to preach.

I love conquest, but I loathe slaughter.

I preside over harvest, but I do not bring calamity.

I hold power, but I do not oppress my people.

I revel in love, but I never

sacrifice myself for my lover.

Humans projected their desires onto me, shaping me into a misread symbol.

I remember every prayer, every rise of ambition, and the manner in which it falls into the abyss.

My golden star in the night sky disappears and returns, again and again, like unending breath.

But this time is different.

I sense a faint tremor - not a prayer, not an offering. Those are like junk mail in modern society.

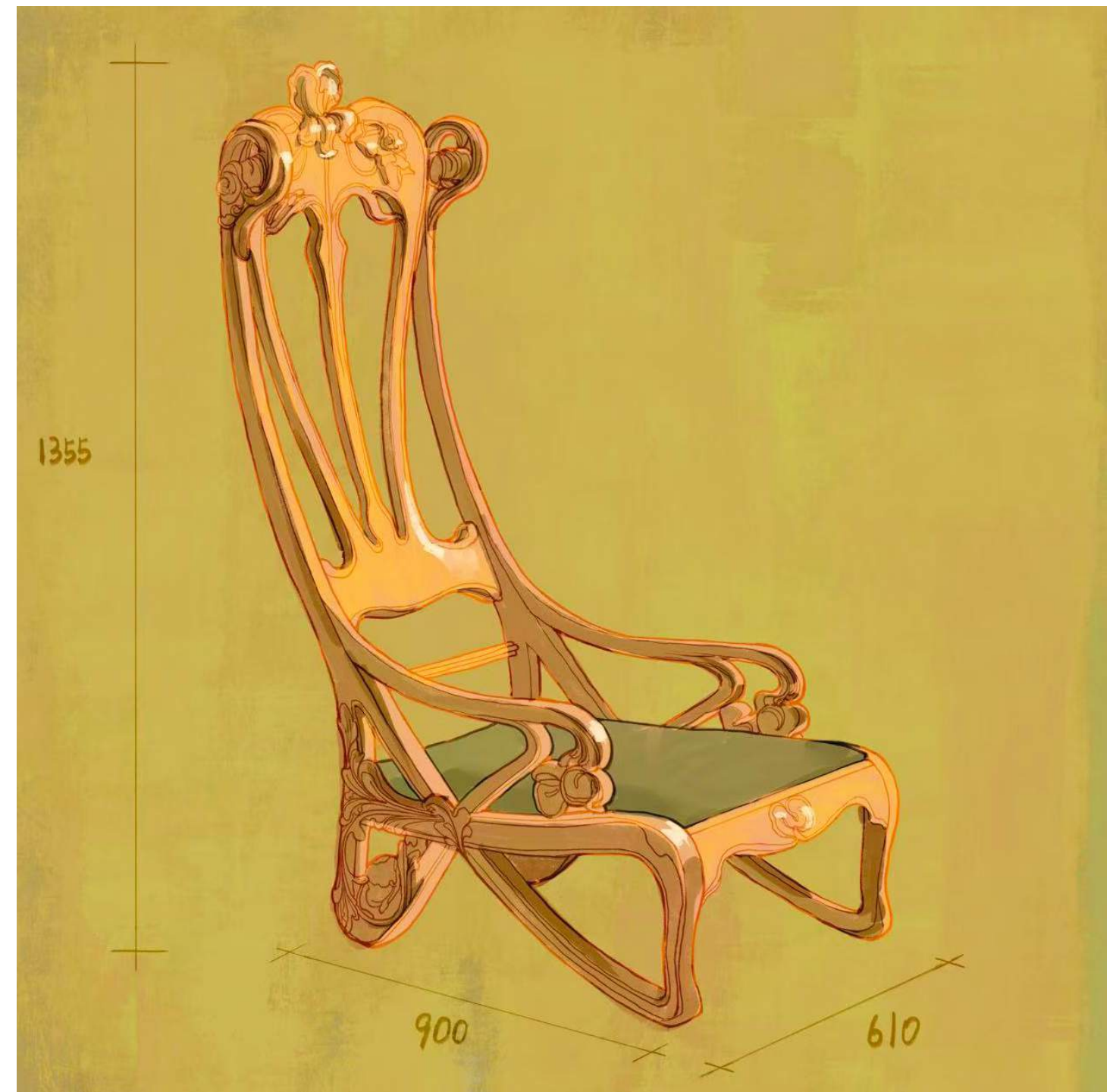
This one is a vibration like my name being spoken again.

I see a theater.

Their imagined holy city, temple, and underworld compressed into a 2.5-dimensional space. A young human reads my story aloud in first person.

And then I realize,

Humans are trying to retell me.



I know very well that I am a loser.

This role is far too distant from me. The director intends to shape Inanna into a valkyrie, yet places her in the position of the gazed-upon object - just like most rewritten goddesses.

I act with discomfort.

Partly because I hold my own subjective interpretation of Inanna.

Partly because my life is a mess.

I don't believe in love.

My rent rises every year.

A role I had secured was stolen away.

I feel like a pillar in this set—closest to Inanna yet farthest from her.

Under the lights, I am so small. I could never become her.

But something trembles inside me when I read the story of Inanna descending to the underworld - how she relinquishes a layer of power at each gate, until only her naked soul stands before Ereshkigal.

I feel like I'm going through that too - shedding.

But unlike her, when I reach the final threshold, I have no idea what will be left of me.

The last staff member turns off the lights without noticing someone is still inside.

I stand on the stage set built for Inanna.

The lights flicker. My chest tightens. The world shifts by one centimeter.

A n a n c i e n t , q u i e t
consciousness awakens inside my mind,
undialogueable, unresistable,
undeniable.



“You were like a different person on stage,” the director applauds.

“I didn’t know Inanna could speak in that way.”

I smile politely. The praise feels like a sharp blade, piercing the unease I try to bury.

My movements become unnervingly precise.

I hesitate no more.

My lines carry a force that brooks no doubt. Strange syllables slip out, startling others.

My voice now holds a fractured rhythm, something archaic.

Do I truly feel nothing strange?

No, I’m simply choosing to ignore it.

I walk through the doors. I recite the lines.

Seven gates, endless, leading to an unknown shore.

A chime jolts me awake.

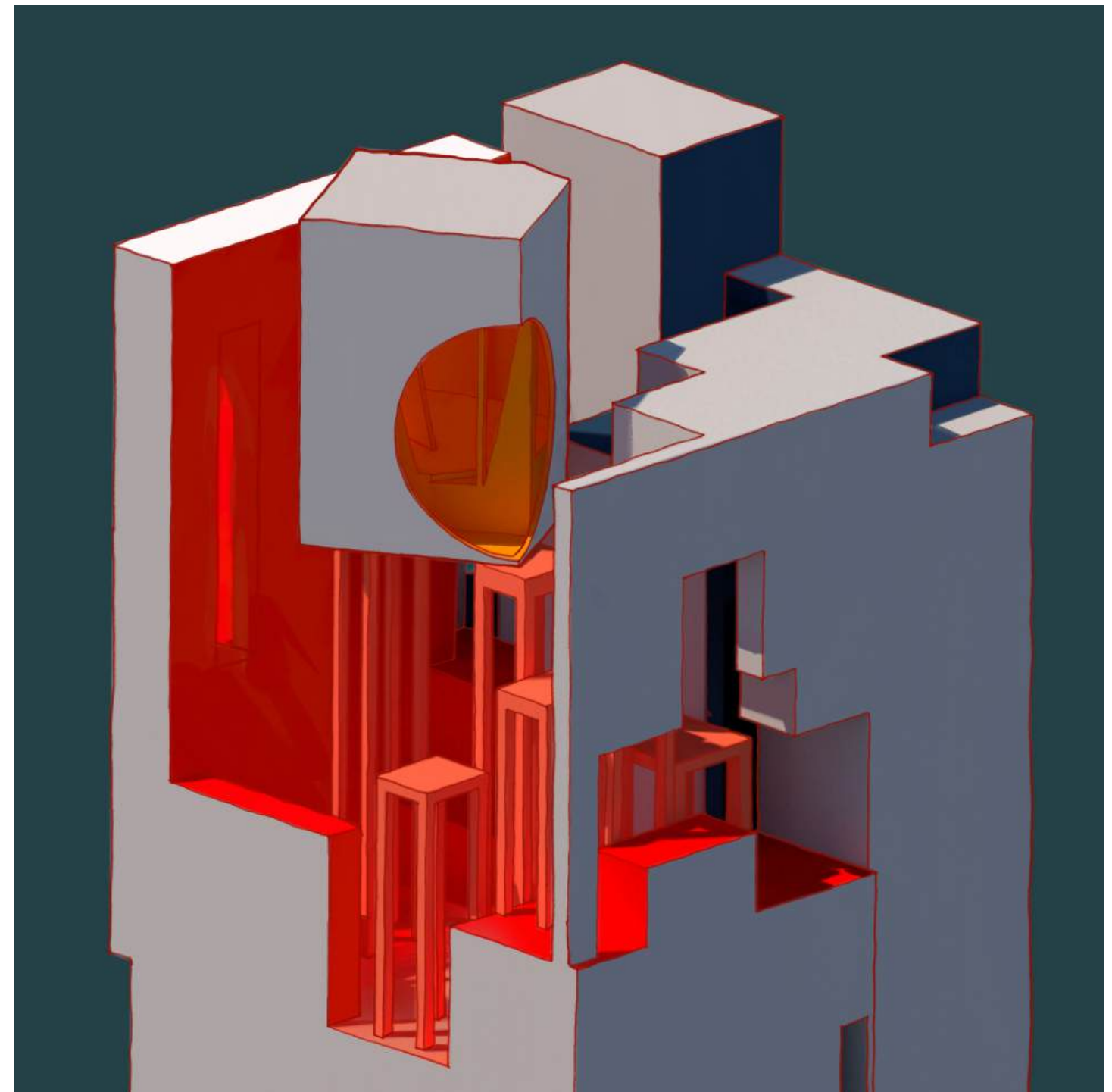
This isn’t the stage.

I’m not myself.

Behind a towering golden temple stands a woman, eyes like burning celestial bodies, holding snakes and stars.

“You are telling my story.”

“Then let me see your world.”



I borrow her body and walk
off the stage.

Paper offerings, plastic
foliage, foam palaces.

On the street, lamplight burns
like the city's ritual fire.

I hear the silent desires in
people's hearts, ringing like
flowing water.

A faint stirring guides me as I
follow the pull of old wishes.

I arrive before a glowing
glass building.

A museum.

My world sealed behind one
thin wall

in vitrines, safes, black boxes.

I suddenly miss the plastic

stage.

At least there, devotion to me
was reenacted, even if only as
performance.

This body I inhabit, this girl.

Her pursuits differ wildly
from mine.

She is contradiction incarnate.

She yearns for love yet fears
every beautiful moment
vanishing.

She craves immersive acting
yet lacks the courage to
challenge the director.

We share one body but stand
on opposite ends of this
planet.

She is part of me.



I can no longer coexist peacefully with her.

Her presence grows stronger. She is like a stone stele, and my power merely the carvings upon it.

This is my stage, not a divine altar.

Those palaces are foam just as herself.

She will never understand.

To me, the me is a fragile, wounded fragment.

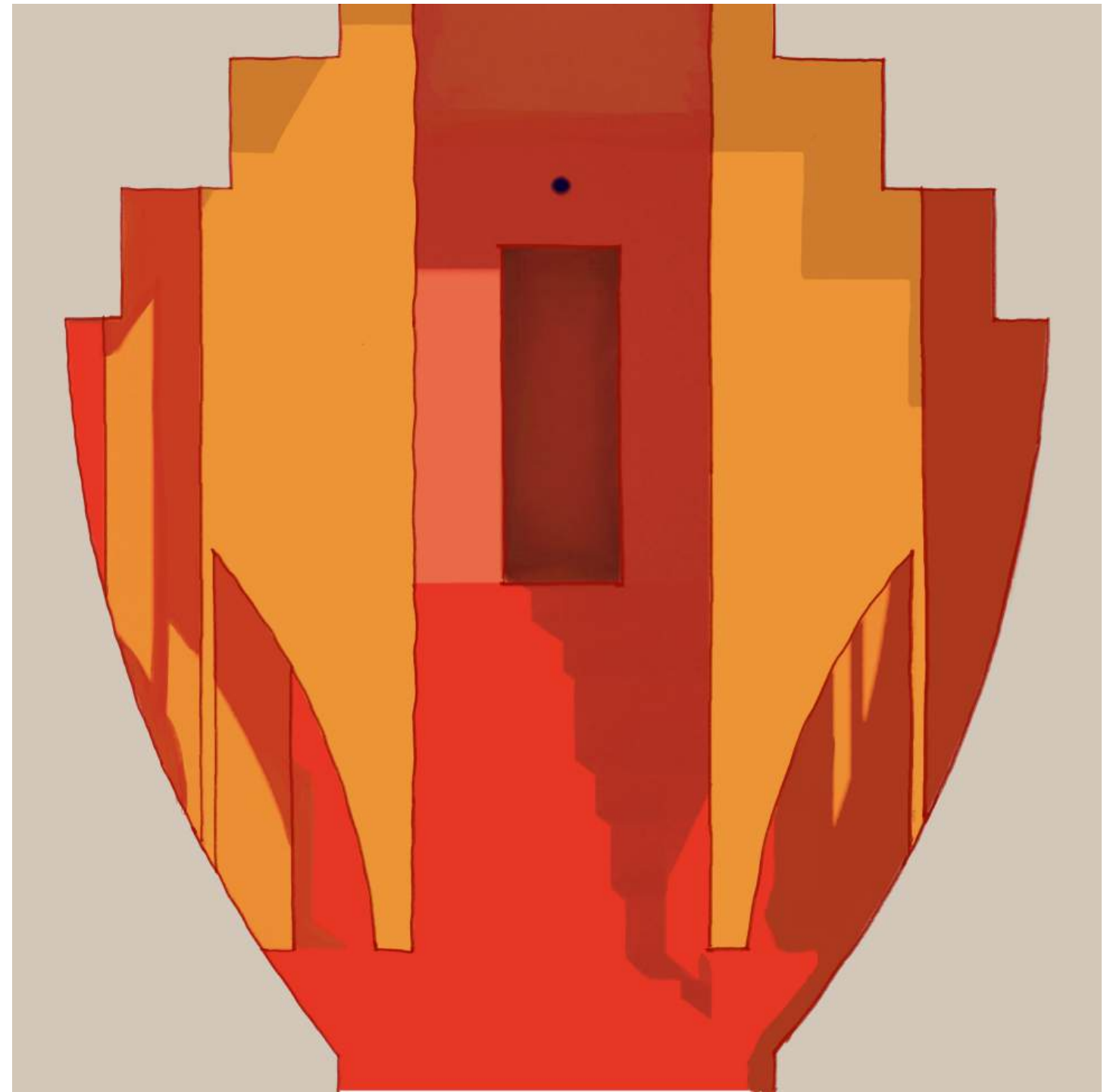
To her, the me is armor, unbreakable and wholly mine.

Opening night approaches.

She may help me, become me, achieve a performance unseen in history.

But afterward, will I still be myself?

Or only a vessel for a god?



Opening night.
The stage lights die.
I stand at the center, just as I
once stood in the Lapis Lazuli
Eanna temple.
Darkness, the breathing of the
audience, and a story yet to
begin.
The girl's overwhelming fear
surges, but I press it down.
She refuses stillness.
I begin to retrace the doors
I once crossed in the distant
age.
Dizziness.

With every gate I pass, my
divine powers peel away,
and her shame, fear, and self-
doubt dissipate.
She is beginning to possess
the will of a god
with the consciousness of a
human.

When the final gate opens, I
realize
Disaster, abundance, love,
power
I thought these belonged to

me.
But they never belonged to
any god.
They belong to those who tell
my story.
She and I reach a rare
consensus:
Divinity survives only when
retold by humans.
And humans can only
understand their fractures
through myth.

She is reborn in this body, just
as I once was in ages past.
Thunderous applause
overwhelms the theater.
A breeze slips through the
columns of the stage, and for
a moment I am back on the
steppe.
I depart her body like the tide
retreating from the seafloor.
When I am spoken of again,
when eyes lift to behold
Venus,
I shall return, borne on the
very breath of those who call
me.

