

A Home Then, A Home Now

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis explores how Hong Kong Canadians remember, inhabit, and imagine their homes to develop a process for positioning transnational belonging within the built environment. In response to discriminatory migration and zoning policies, historic migration from Hong Kong formed built networks of belonging and agency within Canada's cities and suburbs that have been largely overlooked by Western architectural scholarship. *A Home Then, A Home Now* connects the past and present homes of five people who moved from Hong Kong to Canada between 1955–1975, to identify embedded material elements, transnational routines, and memories that relate to histories of migration. Drawing from migration scholarship and participatory methods, I worked back and forth with participants through a series of phone interviews to collaboratively draw their childhood homes and imagine changes to their current homes. We annotated these plan and perspective drawings with lived experiences that navigate spatial purpose, transnational networks, and Hong Kong Canadian identity. By generating spatial knowledge from unheard voices, this research records “other” histories to question dominant forms of architectural history, representation, discourse, and design. This process exemplifies how design disciplines can learn from everyday sites of diasporic memory to better record and imagine home in a rapidly globalizing world.

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To the land I call home, I am aware of and grateful for the privilege to live as a settler here: in Galt, where the University of Waterloo School of Architecture sits in Block One of the Haldimand Tract, land promised to the Attawandaron, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee people; and in Toronto, where this thesis research took place from my bedroom on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee and Wendat people.

In my research, I call this land "Canada" for intergenerational clarity—but I understand that it represents a construct that settlers impressed upon this land through deep-seated violence to Indigenous bodies and identities. The same borders which exclude and regulate migrants to Canada initially enacted and still exert colonial power over the people who first called this land home.

I hope that by centring other narratives, we can collectively move towards better futures.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Author's Declaration | iii |
| Abstract | v |
| Acknowledgments | vii |
| List of Figures | xii |
| Preface | xx |
| 1 Diasporic Homes | 1 |
| Within a globalized world | 3 |
| In Chinese Canadian histories | 9 |
| As research site | 23 |
| 2 Drawing Conversations | 35 |
| Aunty A: On the sunroom | 42 |
| Aunty B: On the sewing room | 92 |
| Uncle C: On the basement | 148 |
| Uncle D: On the second storey | 194 |
| Uncle E: On the sunroom | 226 |
| 3 Learning to Listen | 275 |
| From engagement processes | 277 |
| To diasporic homes | 287 |
| | |
| Bibliography | 293 |
| Appendix | 297 |

List of Figures

Fig. 0.1 Current bedroom, by author.

1 Diasporic Homes

Fig. 1.1 Home diagram, by author.

Fig. 1.2 Thesis diagram, by author.

Fig. 1.3 Migration modes and volumes, image by author.

Canada Immigration. "Immigration Statistics." Accessed April 21, 2022. https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/immigration_statistics-ef/index.html.

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Fig. 1.4 Tickets for passage from Hong Kong to Victoria via Barque "Maria", 1865, BC Archives, K/EA/C43.

Fig. 1.5 Chinese immigration certificate, 1913, Library and Archives Canada, R1206-178-X-E.

Fig. 1.6 An Act respecting Chinese immigration, F.A. Acland, 1923, Library and Archives Canada, 301-304.

Fig. 1.7 The points system, in Vivienne Poy, *Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 212.

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Fig. 1.8 Mapped monde, ou carte générale du monde: dessinée en deux plan-hemispheres, Nicolas Sanson, 1651, map, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, G3200 1651 .S3.

Fig. 1.9 A hill village, c. 1890, University of Bristol - Historical Photographs of China, Ba02-30.

Fig. 1.10 Chinese housing; Victoria, Edouard G. Deville, c. 1886, BC Archives, D-04747.

Fig. 1.11 Mr. Chadwick's Reports on the Sanitary Condition of Hong Kong, Osbert Chadwick, 1882, Great Britain Colonial Office, Internet Archive, 11.

Fig. 1.12 Chinese Town, Westpoint (Hong Kong), 1869-1900, The National Archives U.K., CO 1069-444-23.

Fig. 1.13 Canadian Pacific Railway Chinese labourers camp at Kamloops, Édouard G. Deville, 1886, BC Archives, D-04707.

Fig. 1.14 Chinese businesses on Fisgard Street, Victoria, c. 1890, BC Archives, D-05246.

Fig. 1.15 Queen's Road Central, Central District, Hong Kong Island 皇后大道中, 1900, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong Public Libraries, PH67.5.

Fig. 1.16 Hong Kong, street scene, Harrison Forman, c. 1941, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr200176.

Fig. 1.17 Mr. Lee Hong's laundry, 48 Elizabeth St, 1912, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Sub-series 55, Item 43.

Fig. 1.18 56-58 Elizabeth Street, 1937, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Sub-series 33, Item 171.

Fig. 1.19 Hong Kong, view of Shek Kip Mei squatter village built along hillside, Harrison Forman, c. 1953, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr301962.

Fig. 1.20 Hong Kong, view of Shek Kip Mei Estate public housing complex in New Kowloon, Harrison Forman, c. 1953, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr301977.

Fig. 1.21 Corner of Spadina Ave. and Nassau St., looking south-west, 1972, Toronto Archives, Fonds 2032, Series 841, File 47, Item 1.

Fig. 1.22 Sam Hoa Food Company, south-west corner of Broadview and Gerrard, 1975-1988, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 1465, File 383, Item 1.

Fig. 1.23 牛頭角下邨 (二區) Lower Ngau Tau Kok (II) Estate, Baycrest Wikipedia user - CC-BY-SA-2.5, 2008, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.24 Shanghai Street, Hong Kong, Keith Macgregor, 1984.

Fig. 1.25 An aerial view of housing developments near Markham, Ontario, IDuke, 2005, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.26 Chinatown on Spadina or Dundas[?], 1973-1987, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 1465, File 759, Item 2.

Fig. 1.27 Causeway Bay Sharp Street East Shops, Draïromedpi Boilga, 2021, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.28 Lake Silver Private Housing Estate, Fat Chong, 2011, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.29 Chinatown Centre Mall, 222 Spadina Avenue, Greg Stacey (Greg's Southern Ontario Flickr), 2017, Flickr.

Fig. 1.30 Pacific Mall, Mike Tigas, 2006, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.31 Methodology diagram, by author.

Fig. 1.32 Growing Up Modern Exhibition, Julia Jamrozik and Coryn Kempster, 2021, <http://www.ck-jj.com/growing-up-modern-exhibition>.

Fig. 1.33 Shenzhen, Jan Rothuizen, 2015, <https://janrothuizen.nl/portfolio/shenzhen/>.

Fig. 1.34 Laundry Lives film clip, Sarah Pink and Nadia Astari, 2015, <https://www.laundrylives.com/>.

Fig. 1.35 Sign about migration from Traces of Care Series, Department of Public Memory, 2018, aluminum and vinyl, 12x18 in, <http://departmentofpublicmemory.com/portfolio/artifact-9738-migration/>.

Fig. 1.36 Stories, Dragon Centre Stories, 2019, <https://dragoncentrestories.ca/stories/>.

Fig. 1.37 Thesis diagram, by author.

2 Drawing Conversations

Fig. 2.1 Sample spread, image by author.

Fig. 2.2 Victoria Harbour: Hong Kong and New Territory, Great Britain War Office, 1930, National Library of Australia.

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Fig. 2.3 Map of Toronto, 2022, image by author.

Aunty A: On the sunroom

Fig. A.1 Aunty A's home in Kowloon, image by author.

Fig. A.2 Aunty A's home in Oakville, image by author.

Fig. A.3 The family in front of the laundry compound, image provided by Aunty A.

Fig. A.4 Kwong Wah Hospital, c. 1911, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals.

Fig. A.5 Kowloon Peninsula: 1947, Hong Kong Crown Lands & Survey Office, National Library of Australia, MAP Braga Collection Col./81.

Fig. A.6 The Kowloon Steam Laundry Compound, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.7 Ironing area, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.8 Grandma's house, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.9 The Kung Sheung Daily News 香港工商日報, 1926, Hong Kong Public Libraries, NPKS19260407.

Fig. A.10 The Kung Sheung Daily News 香港工商日報, 1926, Hong Kong Public Libraries, NPKS19260407.

Fig. A.11 1944 Japanese occupation period 年日佔時期, unknown newspaper company, 1944, 歷史時空 Tsewaii Society & Culture Website.

Fig. A.12 The Kowloon Steam Laundry Compound, image by author.

Fig. A.13 Home in Kowloon, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.14 Home in Kowloon, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.15 Home in Oakville, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.16 Backyard, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.17 Ottawa garden, photos by Aunty A.

Fig. A.18 Travel trunk, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.19 Grandmother's travel trunk, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.20 Sketch of travel trunks, image by author.

Fig. A.21 Carpet, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.22 Sketch of carpet, image by author.

Fig. A.23 Vase, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.24 Sketch of vase, image by author.

Fig. A.25 Perspective drawing, image by author.

Fig. A.26 Sunroom, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.27 Pointsettia in sunroom, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.28 Chrysanthemum in sunroom, image by Aunty A.

Fig. A.29 Process work, image by author.

Fig. A.30 Sunroom hotpot proposal, image by author.

Fig. A.31 Sunroom bookshelf proposal, image by author.

Fig. A.32 Thesis diagram, by author.

Aunty B: On the sewing room

Fig. B.1 Aunty B's home in Wan Chai, image by author.

Fig. B.2 Aunty B's home in Mississauga, image by author.

Fig. B.3 Jaffe Road in Wan Chai 灣仔謝斐道, c.1960, Hong Kong Information Services Department, Hong Kong Public Libraries, PHAR318.1.

Fig. B.4 Wan Chai 灣仔, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, P2008.0759.

Fig. B.5 Hong Kong: Victoria, Great Britain War Office, 1945, National Library of Australia, MAP G7944.H6 1945.

Fig. B.6 Plan drawing photo series, images by author.

Fig. B.7 Home in Wan Chai v1, image by author.

Fig. B.8 Home in Wan Chai v2, image by Aunty B.

Fig. B.9 Home in Wan Chai v3, image by Aunty B and author.

Fig. B.10 Home in Wan Chai v4, image by author.

Fig. B.11 Home in Wan Chai v5, image by author.

Fig. B.12 Home in Wan Chai ground floor plan, image by author.

Fig. B.13 Home in Wan Chai loft floor plan, image by author.

Fig. B.14 Home in Wan Chai second floor plan, image by author.

Fig. B.15 Kitchen, image by Aunty B.

Fig. B.16 Staircase, image by Aunty B.

Fig. B.17 Home in Mississauga, image by Aunty B.

Fig. B.18 Stamp collection, images by Aunty B.

Fig. B.19 Home in Mississauga, image by author.

Fig. B.20 Home in Mississauga, image by author.

Fig. B.21 Home in Mississauga, image by author.

- Fig. B.22 Sewing room proposal*, image by author.
- Fig. B.23 Sewing room plan v1*, image by author.
- Fig. B.24 Sewing room plan v2*, image by Aunty B.
- Fig. B.25 Sewing room plan v3*, image by author.
- Fig. B.26 Sewing room plan v4*, image by author.
- Fig. B.27 Sewing room plan v5*, image by author.
- Fig. B.28 A more practical sewing room proposal*, image by author.
- Fig. B.29 Thesis diagram*, by author.

Uncle C: On the basement

- Fig. C.1 Uncle C's home in Happy Valley*, image by author.
- Fig. C.2 Uncle C's home in Scarborough*, image by author.
- Fig. C.3 Happy Valley Racetrack*, Michael Cussans, 1963, Gwulo.
- Fig. C.4 A day at the races*, Ted Tharme, 1944–46, Commando Veterans Archive.
- Fig. C.5 Victoria Harbour: Hong Kong and New Territory*, Great Britain War Office, 1930, National Library of Australia.
- Fig. C.6 Plan sketches*, image by author.
- Fig. C.7 Home in Happy Valley*, image by Uncle C.
- Fig. C.8 Deconstructed plan of home in Happy Valley*, image by Uncle C and author.
- Fig. C.9 Stanley*, Kirstin Shafer Mortiz and Frederic A. Moritz, 1979, Gwulo.
- Fig. C.10 Home in Happy Valley perspective*, image by author.
- Fig. C.11 Home in Happy Valley perspective v2*, image by author.
- Fig. C.12 Scarborough home process work*, image by author.
- Fig. C.13 Kitchen*, image by Uncle C.
- Fig. C.14 Dining*, image by Uncle C.
- Fig. C.15 Home in Scarborough*, image by Uncle C.
- Fig. C.16 Basement in Scarborough*, images by Uncle C.
- Fig. C.17 Scarborough basement plan v1*, image by author.
- Fig. C.18 Scarborough basement plan v2*, image by author.
- Fig. C.19 Scarborough basement plan v3*, image by author.
- Fig. C.20 Scarborough basement plan v4*, image by author.

Fig. C.21 Basement beach proposal, image by author.

Fig. C.22 Thesis diagram, by author.

Uncle D: On the second storey

Fig. D.1 Uncle D's home in Kowloon City, image by author.

Fig. D.2 Uncle D's home in Oakville, image by author.

Fig. D.3 23 Junction Road, 2019, Google maps.

Fig. D.4 Aerial Photograph of Kowloon Walled City from the direction of Carpenter Road (junction of Tung Tsing Road), 1967, Government Records Service Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, HKRS163-1-2537.

Fig. D.5 Plan of Kowloon Walled City, 1965, Government Records Service Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, HKRS163-1-2537.

Fig. D.6 Home in Kowloon, image by Uncle D.

Fig. D.7 Home in Kowloon v1, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.8 Home in Kowloon v2, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.9 Home in Oakville ground floor, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.10 Home in Oakville lower floor, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.11 Home in Oakville upper floor, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.12 Home in Oakville v1, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.13 Home in Oakville v2, image by Uncle D and author.

Fig. D.14 Second storey proposal, image by author.

Fig. D.15 Thesis diagram, by author.

Uncle E: On the sunroom

Fig. E.1 Uncle E's home in Kowloon, image by author.

Fig. E.2 Uncle Es home in Ottawa, image by author.

Fig. E.3 Prince Edward Road, Kowloon City 九龍城太子道, c. 1930, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, P2007.0157.

Fig. E.4 Aerial view of Mong Kok 從空中鳥瞰旺角, 1982, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, S2009.1335.

Fig. E.5 Conservation plan, 2009, Hong Kong Urban Renewal Authority.

Fig. E.6 Home in Kowloon v1, image by author.

Fig. E.7 Home in Kowloon v2, image by author.

Fig. E.8 Home in Kowloon v3, image by author.

Fig. E.9 Home in Kowloon v4, image by author.

Fig. E.10 Prince Edward Road flats, Barbara Merchant, 1941, Gwulo.

Fig. E.11 中文（香港）：太子道西JJ190-204/210-212號雙數門牌, 2010, Chong Fat, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. E.12 Home in Burlington, image by Uncle E.

Fig. E.13 Home in Burlington driveway, image by Uncle E.

Fig. E.14 Home in Burlington v1, image by author.

Fig. E.15 Home in Burlington v2, drawing by author.

Fig. E.16 Home in Burlington v3, drawing by author.

Fig. E.17 Home in Burlington v4, drawing by author.

Fig. E.18 Sunroom in Ottawa, images provided by Uncle E.

Fig. E.19 Sunroom in Ottawa, image by Uncle E.

Fig. E.20 House in Ottawa, image provided by Uncle E.

Fig. E.21 Home in Ottawa v1, drawing by author.

Fig. E.22 Home in Ottawa v2, drawing by author.

Fig. E.23 Home in Ottawa v3, drawing by author.

Fig. E.24 Expanded sunroom proposal, image by author.

Fig. E.25 Thesis diagram, by author.

3 Learning to Listen

Fig. 3.1 Thesis diagram, by author.

Fig. 3.2 Hong Kong to Canada, image by author.

Appendix

Fig. G.1 Side view, image by Aunty G.

Fig. G.2 200 Prince Edward Road, image by Aunty G.

Fig. G.3 Front façade, image by Aunty G.

Fig. G.4 Front entry, image by Aunty G.

Fig. G.5 Back stair, image by Aunty G.

Fig. G.6 Back stair perspective, image by author.

Preface

I find home in the English language.

My parents are first-generation and second-generation immigrants respectively from communist Czech Republic and colonial Hong Kong, who mutually agreed that I would stick to learning the only language they shared. The few things that I refer to in other languages fall into two main categories:

1. Food
 - a. made in a Czech household like *kolache* (fruity pastry) or *goulash* (beef soup)
 - b. what we'd order at a Chinese *dim sum* restaurant during large family gatherings, like *cha siu bao* (bbq pork bun), *cheung fan* (rice noodle roll), and my personal favourite, *har gow* (shrimp dumpling)
2. The people we shared that food with
 - a. *babi* (grandmother), *děda* (grandfather)
 - b. *po po* (maternal grandmother), *kung kung* (maternal grandfather), *yi gu ma* (eldest paternal aunty), *ko w fu* (maternal uncle), and many more

For a long time, I didn't know they had names in English. I didn't question the impossible number of aunties and uncles I had—although I now understand that this is how our family refers to anyone senior with whom we're familiar, regardless of actual relation. Most of my relatives have lived here for a long time and their English is generally quite good, so I'm lucky to have dodged the language barriers that many families in Canada encounter daily. However, I can't understand the quick comments and humorous asides that bounce around their side of the table. I can see how different their lives are from mine, and I wonder at the personalities and histories I do not know. I've spent my whole life in this country, while they crossed half the world to eventually share a table with me.

Before now, I hadn't given much thought to the concept of home. It was a fixed constant, steadily existing in the background: first, a sleepy bungalow in St. Catharines, Ontario where the distant sound of cherry bangers scaring birds off the farmers' fields was a familiar soundtrack to our daily lives. Then, a few different student houses near the University of Waterloo School of Architecture in Galt, Ontario where I spent time in between work terms and study terms. Now, home is the top two stories of a townhouse on the west

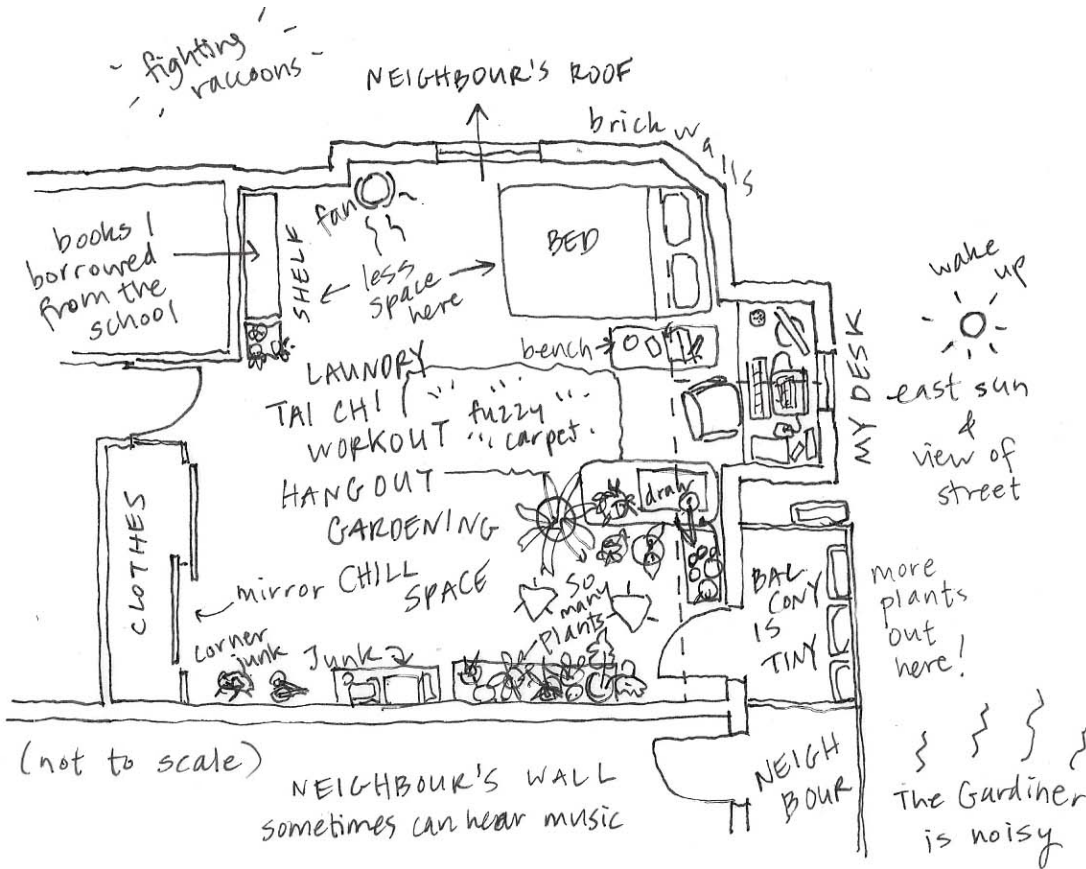


Fig. 0.1 *Current bedroom*, by author.

side of Toronto, Ontario. I've become intimately familiar with it as a workplace, garden, movie theatre, restaurant, bar, and gym over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. From lockdown to lockdown, we retreat into our homes—but there are so many people living here who understand home differently than I do.

Within my grasp of the English language and beyond, there are many things I'd like to be more fluent in: migration scholarship, engagement processes, architectural history. I imagine this research as a starting point, using spatial tools to communicate dimensions of home previously unseen to me between movement, memory, and architecture.

1

Diasporic Homes

On definitions of home, histories of home, and methodologies to understand home within movement.

“...home is like an accordion, in that it both stretches to expand outwards to distant and remote places, while also squeezing to embed people in their proximate and immediate locales and social relations.”

—David Ralph & Lynn Staeheli, 2011, “Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities,” *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7: 525.

Within a globalized world

1 For several prominent theories on the meaning of place, see: Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964); Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971); Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

2 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

3 Paolo Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives*, Mobility & Politics (New York, NY, U.S.A: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, "Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities," *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 517–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2011.00434.x>.

4 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 523.

5 Ralph and Staeheli, 524.

6 The term "diasporic home" refers to the homes of people belonging to a diaspora: those who collectively leave behind a country of origin.

7 Divya Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-Memory through Artefacts in the British Asian Home," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29, no. 3 (2004): 315.

8 Tolia-Kelly, 327.

Home is a site of belonging that becomes increasingly complex through globalization. As people migrate, their subjective boundaries of home stretch to include places that are local and global, past and present, remembered and imagined, familiar and foreign.

Scholarship about belonging has been strongly influenced by its theorized relationship to place.¹ Prominent philosopher Gaston Bachelard contributed significantly to dominant 20th century philosophical thought by exploring lived experiences as rooted in architecture. Bachelard described home as a spatial origin and first encounter with architecture, referring to a childhood home as a sedentary place of nostalgia fixed firmly in the past.² But how do we theorize home for people who find belonging in multiple places, in the gaps and overlaps of defined national spheres? In response to increasing global migration, home has become a growing site of research within intersecting fields of sociology, anthropology, geography, urban studies, and architecture.

On transnational belonging

In recent years, scholarship on belonging and migration has challenged Eurocentric assumptions of place by examining elements of home that people bring with them throughout their movement.³ As described by geographers David Ralph and Lynn Staeheli, transnational belonging is socially defined by dominant groups through inclusion—or more often, exclusion.⁴ This is exemplified through migration policies that determine who can cross a national border, or through zoning regulations that decide where a home can be built and what it looks like. Ralph and Staeheli argue that "acts of non-conformity to norms of belonging are important because they foreground migrants' own practices of belonging that may emerge in the interplay of sameness and difference."⁵ I believe that these acts of non-conformity are most visible within the focus of this research: the diasporic home.⁶

In studying material dimensions of migrants' homes, social geographer and historian Divya Tolia-Kelly suggests that landscapes of migration are "neither bounded nationalistic landscapes nor lived tangible everyday spaces...[they are] a post-colonial space-time, unbounded by formal nation or national history, not usually mapped or recorded by the academy."⁷ Tolia-Kelly argues that "any formulation of a 'national' or 'traditional' culture is dependent on the domestic scale."⁸ In other words, the physical homes of migrants

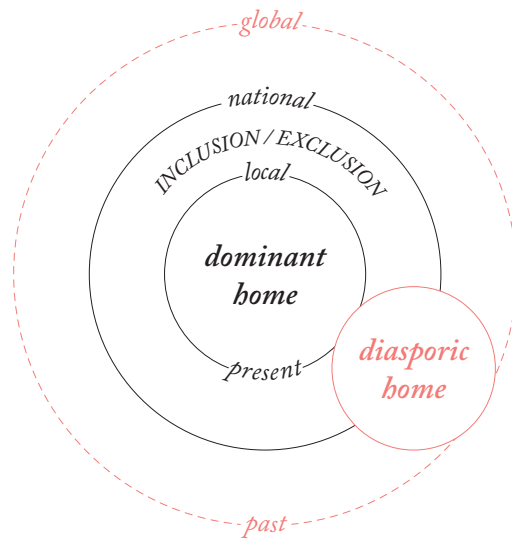


Fig. 1.1 *Home diagram*, by author.

Positioning the diasporic home in relation to the dominant home within different scales and tenses.

hold embedded cultural knowledge that is often overlooked by experts. As designers of home at many scales of human experience, what can architects learn from the perspectives of those who come from other places?

Diasporic homes are sites of diverse and valid ways of belonging that collectively negotiate histories of ethnicity as attached to space. Architectural educator and scholar Mirjana Lozanovska describes “ethno-architecture” as local environments that recognize ethnicity within global networks, without stereotyping their visual appearance.⁹ She argues that ethno-architecture “defines and articulates a history of agency, making, and expression that reframe the question of the politics of migration.”¹⁰ Considering ethno-architecture as a record of agency and migration embedded in buildings, this thesis moves to make space for transnational belonging within Canadian architectural discourse.

On the role of this thesis

This work examines how transnational belonging in Canada is shaped by its relationship to Hong Kong. Chinese migrants to Canada have faced intense discrimination due to British colonial influence in Canadian migration and housing policy.¹¹ Built networks of transnational agency emerged within Canada’s cities

9 Mirjana Lozanovska, *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration*, Architext Series (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 4.

10 Lozanovska, 217.

11 For comprehensive writing on Chinese Canadian histories, see Arlene Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878: From Outside to Inside the Circle* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011); Vivienne Poy, *Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013).

and suburbs, such as the development of Chinatowns and Chinese malls, contextualized by forces including racial tensions and economic booms.

What can architects learn from this history about Hong Kong Canadian homes today, and how they continue to shape the built environment? How is transnational belonging embedded within diasporic homes? This research tests a process to generate implicit historic knowledge about everyday spaces of diasporic homes. Engaging with people in conversation and collaborative drawing, the project explores stories of movement told through the homes of five people who moved from Hong Kong to Canada between 1955–1975, after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The following timeline provides historic context from Hong Kong's colonial beginnings to the present, presenting building typologies related to migration between British colonial Hong Kong and Canada. I connect themes of home as *roots*, *other*, and *status* between each context to explore migrants' physical and conceptual meaning of "home." Although they are geographically separate worlds, this research explores how these two places are closer than they appear.

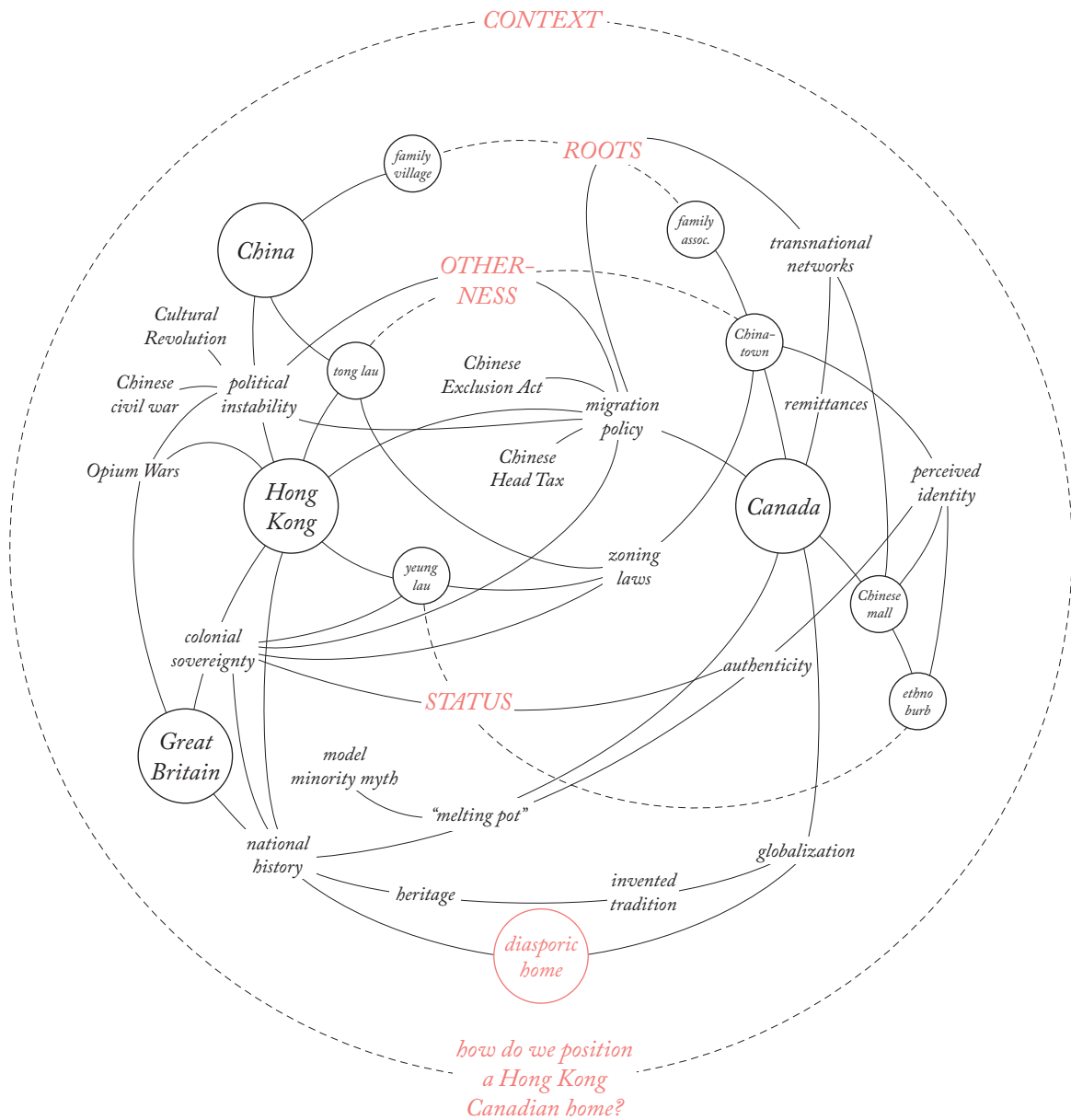


Fig. 1.2 Thesis diagram, by author.

Showing where this project engages with the context of migration history, inspired by Mark Lombardi's maps of capital flows.

HIS Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enact as follows:—

PROHIBITED CLASSES.

- S.** No person of Chinese origin or descent unless a Canadian citizen within the meaning of paragraph section two of *The Immigration Act* shall be permitted to enter or land in Canada, or having entered or landed in Canada shall be permitted to remain therein, with the exception of any of the following classes, hereinafter called "prohibited classes":—
- (a) Idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, insane persons and persons who have been so at any time previously;
 - (b) Persons afflicted with tuberculosis or any form, or with any loathsome disease, disease which is contagious or infectious, may be or become dangerous to the public health, whether such persons intend to settle in Canada or only to pass through Canada in transit to another country;
 - (c) Persons who have been convicted of, or having committed, any crime involving moral turpitude;
 - (d) Prostitutes and women and girls coming to Canada for any immoral purpose and pimps or procurers of such women and girls;
 - (e) Persons who procure or attempt to bring into Canada prostitutes or women or girls for the purpose of prostitution or other immoral purpose;
 - (f) Professional beggars or vagrants;

Fig. 1.6 An Act respecting Chinese immigration

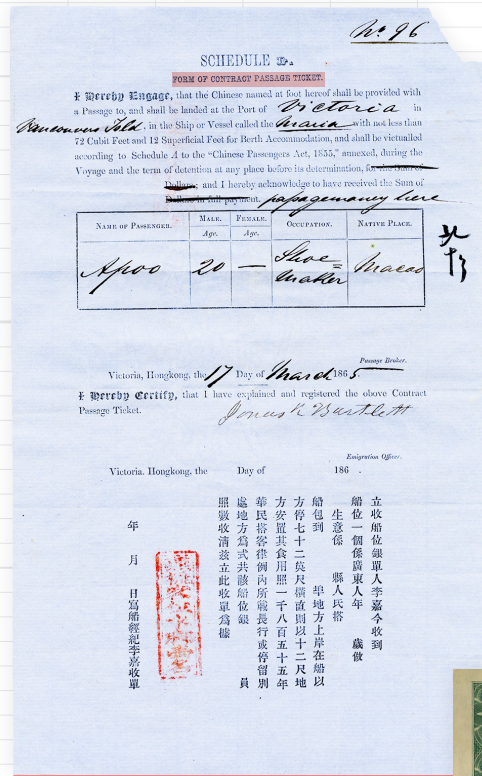


Fig. 1.4 Tickets for passage from Hong Kong to Victoria via Barque "Maria"



Fig. 1.5 Chinese immigration certificate

Chinese Migration to Canada

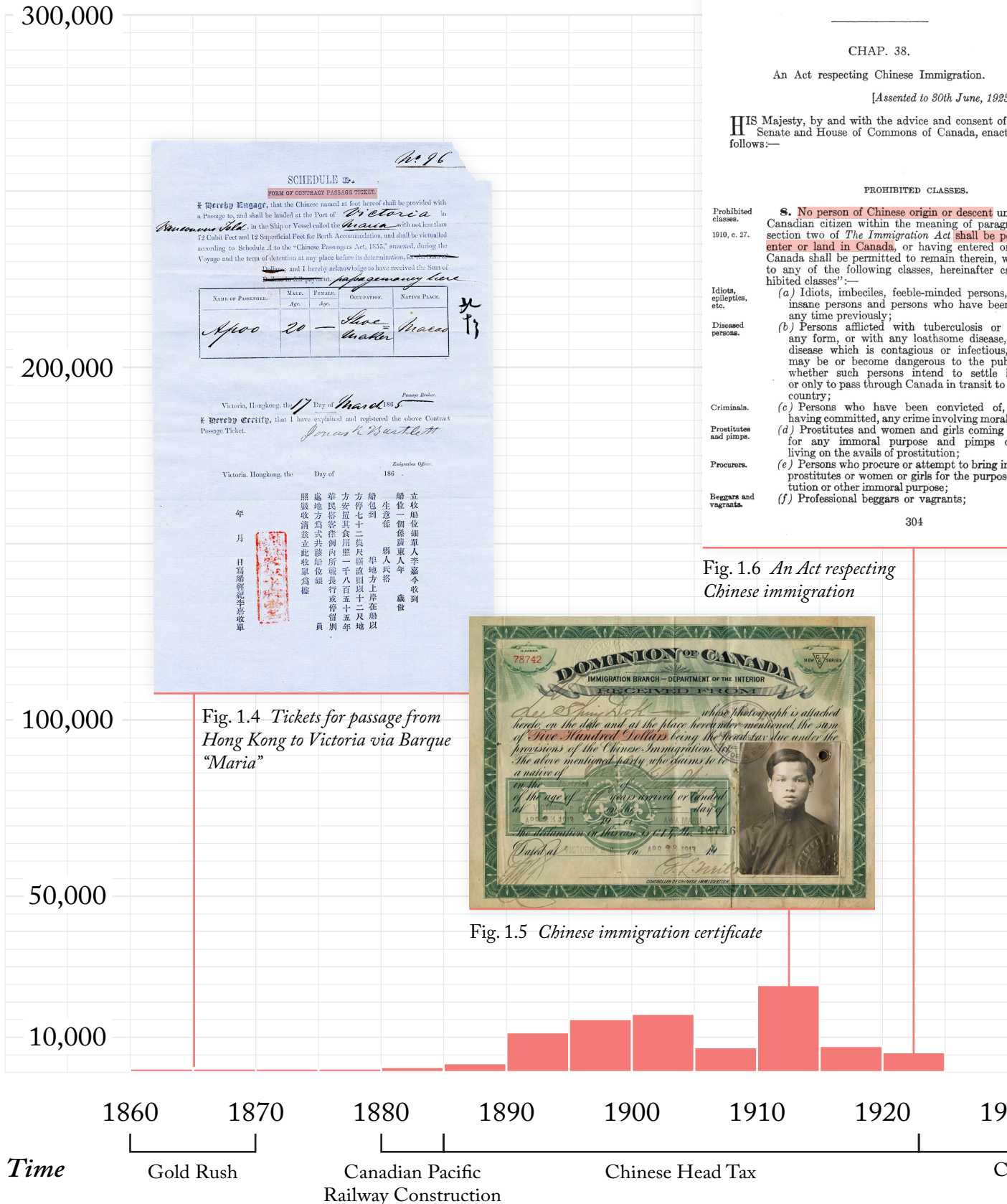


Fig. 1.3 Migration modes and volumes, image by author.

*Before 1967, Canadian statistics were documented based on ethnic origin rather than country of origin. Chinese immigrants before 1947 were mainly from Guangdong in China.

the R.S. c. 95;
1938, c. 14;
as 1917, c. 7;
1921, c. 21.

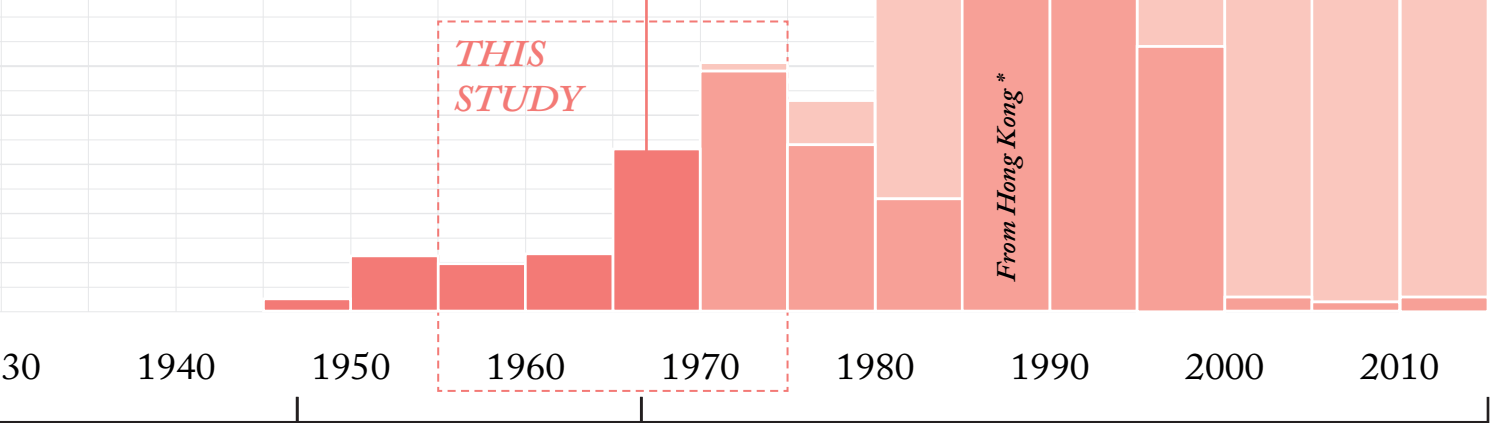
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graph (f) of
mitted to
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epileptics,
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lic health,
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some other

or admit
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to Canada
or persons
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(g)

| | 1967 | 1974 | 1978 | 1986 | 1993 | 2001 | 2003 | 2010 ^d |
|--|--------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Education | 20 | 20 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Experience | - | - | 8 | 8 | 8 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Specific vocation | 10 | 10 | 15 | 15 | 17 | | | |
| Occupational demand | 15 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 10 | | | |
| Age | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Arranged employment | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Language | 10 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 14 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Personal suitability | 15 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 10 | | | |
| Levels | - | - | - | 10 | 8 | | | |
| Relative Destination | o/3/5+ | o/3/5 | | 5 | - | | | |
| Adaptability (family in Canada; studied in Canada) | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | - | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Pass mark | 50 | 50 | 50 | 70 | 67 | 75 | 67 | 67 |

Fig. 1.7 The points system



Chinese Exclusion Act (CEA) CEA Partial Repeal Immigration Points System Introduced

In Chinese Canadian histories

12 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 52.

13 R. Brooke Jacobsen, "Changes in the Chinese Family," *Social Science* 51, no. 1 (1976): 26–31. \u00u8220{Changes in the Chinese Family, \u00u8221{ \i{Social Science} 51, no. 1 (1976

14 Luis Eduardo Perez Murcia, "The Sweet Memories of Home Have Gone': Displaced People Searching for Home in a Liminal Space," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 9 (July 4, 2019): 1515–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1491299>. \u00u8221{ \i{Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies} 45, no. 9 (July 4, 2019

15 In Cantonese, these sojourners were called *waa kiu*, or overseas Chinese, and maintained strong family ties to their homeland.

16 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 26.

17 Chan, 26.

18 Ban Seng Hoe, *Enduring Hardship: The Chinese Laundry in Canada* (Gatineau, Québec :, 2003), 44, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.30000092846272>.

19 Sara Ahmed discusses the importance of geographic place in creating community kinship by the act of having both experienced the same place, to create a "community of strangers." Sara Ahmed, "Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 1, 1999): 336, <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303>.

Home as roots: the family village to the family association

Home represents a beginning, as a place closely tied to family origins. After China ceded Hong Kong to the British after the First Opium War in 1842, Great Britain developed it as a colonial trade port that facilitated migration to other British colonies. Early migrants to Canada in the late 17th century came from family villages in the southern Guangdong region of China: groups of people who typically made a living through farming or fishing and shared a common family name [Fig. 1.9].¹² A predominant Confucian understanding of home meant that family loyalty was valued above all else, whether at home or overseas.¹³ This "rooted" conception of home underscored dominant migration scholarship before the 1990s, reinforcing that home is not *here*, in the present, but *there*: in the past, a family and a place left behind.¹⁴

As political instability caused poverty and unrest in China, family villages pooled money to send male breadwinners to British Columbia during the Fraser Valley Gold Rush.¹⁵ Canada was called *gum san*, or Gold Mountain, a land of wealth and promise. Overseas Chinese workers sent money to their family villages through remittances and were seen by dominant groups as sojourners: people who wanted to return to their home country after making money in Canada.¹⁶ Historians disagree whether Chinese migrants wished to leave because of an ingrained nationalist sense of home in China, or the racist political agendas which prohibited them from Canadian rights such as voting, holding political office, purchasing land, or practising certain professions.¹⁷ The influx of male migrant labourers and the strong anti-Chinese sentiment within Canadian policy and housing led to the establishment of slum-like cultural enclaves, in which the family association manifested transnational connections based on geographic origin:

...[V]arious associations were formed within the Chinese quarters of major cities for mutual protection, social welfare, and assistance. These associations were based upon common surnames, common geographic origins, and various recreational, cultural, and fraternal needs. They provided a means of social communication, meetings, visits, and the celebration of festivals, and were "a home away from home."¹⁸

As a form of migrant solidarity, these associations helped communities of strangers find a sense of belonging overseas.¹⁹ Their major services included sending migrants' remittances to family

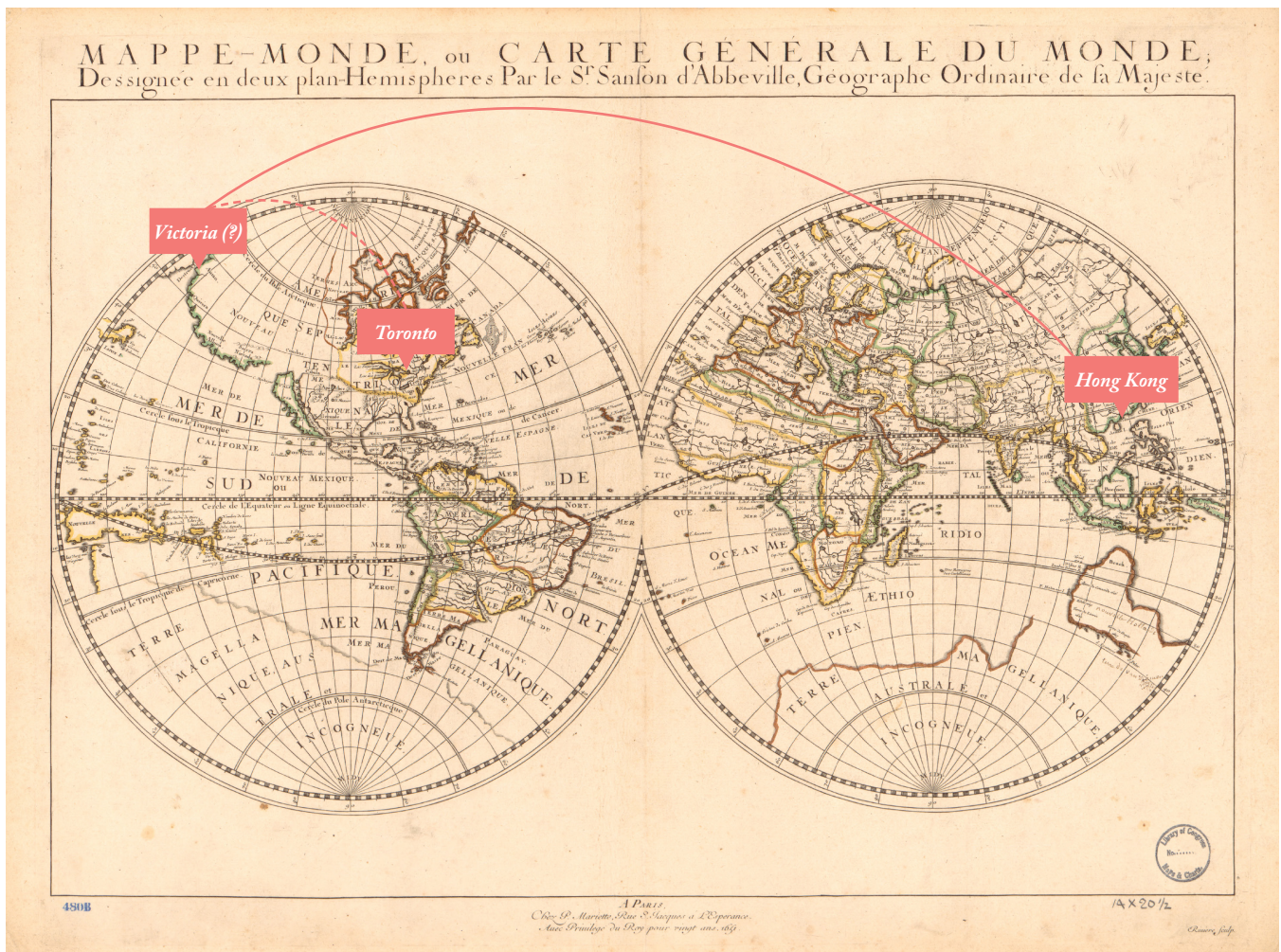


Fig. 1.8 *Mappe-monde, ou carte générale du monde: dessinée en deux plan-hemispheres*, Nicolas Sanson, 1651, map, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, G3200 1651 .S3.

1839-1842
First Opium War ends with China ceding Hong Kong to Great Britain

1858-1860
Second Opium War between China and Great Britain

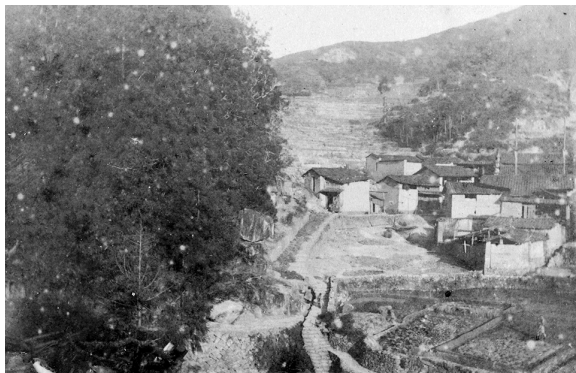


Fig. 1.9 *A hill village*, c. 1890, University of Bristol - Historical Photographs of China, Ba02-30.

In Guangdong

very little Chinese migration to Canada

1858-1870
The Fraser Valley Gold Rush



Fig. 1.10 *Chinese housing; Victoria*, Edouard G. Deville, c. 1886, BC Archives, D-04747.

In Canada

In Chinese Canadian histories

20 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 52. Note that with these remittances, family villages in Guangdong built Western-style houses, notably in Taishan. See Shan Deqi's book *Chinese Vernacular Dwellings* for more information.

21 Hoe, *Enduring Hardship*, 46.

22 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 521.

23 Ralph and Staeheli, 525.

24 Ralph and Staeheli, 525.

25 Robin Cohen, "Seeds, Roots, Rhizomes and Epiphytes: Botany and Diaspora," in *Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices and Belonging*, by Nando Sigona et al. (University of Oxford, 2017), 2.

26 Cecilia L. Chu, "Between Typologies and Representation: The Tong Lau and the Discourse of the 'Chinese House' in Colonial Hong Kong," January 1, 2012, <https://www.academia.edu/>.

villages, as well as returning migrants' bodies, should they die overseas; they also provided housing services and financial assistance [Fig. 1.14].²⁰ It was illegal for Canadian banks to loan money to Chinese migrants, so family associations formed a framework for informal loans through which members consistently contributed money and bid for their turn to receive the pool.²¹ The family association provided a foothold for Chinese people to find a sense of community overseas, and gave them agency to establish themselves outside of discriminatory political frameworks.

The family association as part of a transnational network connects both *there* and *here*: simultaneously rooted in the past, but also shifting dynamically as people move through overlapping physical and social geographies.²² Ralph and Staeheli present a spatial perspective on migration, suggesting that "...home is like an accordion, in that it both stretches to expand outwards to distant and remote places, while also squeezing to embed people in their proximate and immediate locales and social relations."²³ They refer to a "spatial syntax" of belonging which constructs a person's identity from multitudes of interwoven places, feelings, and people.²⁴ Within this syntax of belonging, relationships between people spring up in different geographic locations, growing from different origins, connected through networks of relatives, information, remittances, and buildings.²⁵ The family association connects people to distant places, contributing to a sense of belonging overseas.

Home is forged through multiple layers of place-based connection.

Home as other: the tong lau to Chinatown

The *tong lau*, translating to "Chinese building," is a mid-rise back-to-back shophouse typology that housed an influx of Chinese migrants to colonial Hong Kong during a period of political turmoil in China.²⁶ These tenement buildings are commonly thought to be modeled after the Chinese-style shophouse, with commercial use on the ground floor and high-density residential units on the upper floors [Fig. 1.11, 1.12]. *Tong lau* did not contain many structural interior walls, which made it easier to house more people by partitioning multiple rooms within a single unit. These buildings were typically zoned into less desirable high-density "Chinese" areas of the city, away from the more spacious British hillside housing; from a British colonial perspective, *tong lau* were associated with poor hygienic standards that were supposedly ingrained

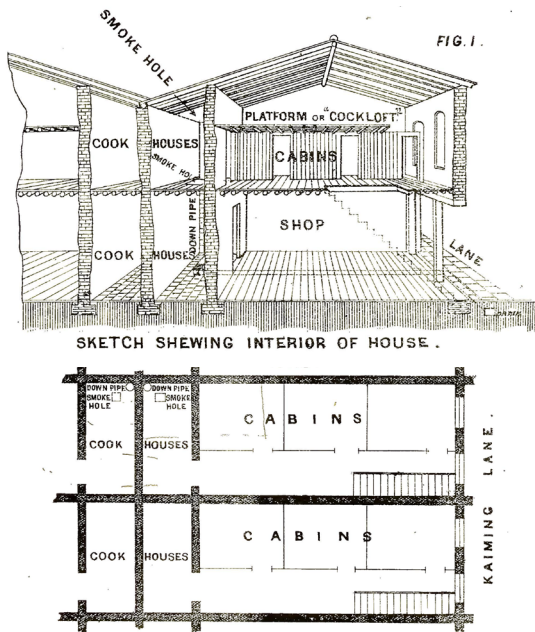


Fig. 1.11 *Mr. Chadwick's Reports on the Sanitary Condition of Hong Kong*, Osbert Chadwick, 1882, Great Britain Colonial Office, Internet Archive, 11.

migration to Canada encouraged

migration to Canada inhibited



Fig. 1.12 *Chinese Town, Westpoint (Hong Kong)*, 1869-1900, The National Archives U.K., CO 1069-444-23.

Note the European-style housing further up the hill.

1898
Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory leases additional territory to Great Britain for 99 years

In Hong Kong



Fig. 1.13 *Canadian Pacific Railway Chinese labourers camp at Kamloops*, Édouard G. Deville, 1886, BC Archives, D-04707.

The construction of the railroad depended on employing Chinese labourers for little pay.

1881-1885
Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) with the use of Chinese labourers

1885
Chinese Immigration Act implements \$50 head tax on Chinese immigrants



Fig. 1.14 *Chinese businesses on Fisgard Street, Victoria*, c. 1890, BC Archives, D-05246.

Shown here is the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, constructed in 1885.

In Canada

In Chinese Canadian histories

27 Chu, “Between Typologies and Representation.”

28 Chu.

29 The Chinese Head tax was used to deter Chinese migration, at \$50 in 1885, \$100 in 1900, and \$500 in 1903. The price was determined through studies conducted on the yearly salary of Chinese labourers. Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 29.

30 “Between 1878 and 1899, twenty-six laws were passed in British Columbia to prevent or restrict the rights of the Chinese. These included laws forbidding voting rights, purchase of Crown (government) land, and employment in the construction of roads, bridges, and other public works.” Arlene Chan, *The Chinese Community in Toronto: Then and Now* (Dundurn, 2013).

31 Dell Upton, “Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Invented Traditions,” *Historical Archaeology* 30, no. 2 (1996): 1–7.

within the Chinese race.²⁷ These buildings were regulated in 1903 with “improved” British sanitation standards that implemented courtyards, larger windows, and height limitations—despite pushback from wealthy Chinese developers, who were profiting greatly from constructing these high density tenement buildings.²⁸

As British developers realized how profitable higher density buildings could be, the *yeung lau* typology or “Western building” emerged, carrying a distinct status of improved living standards associated with Western European life [Fig. 1.15]. The *yeung lau* were built with pre-established rooms for bedrooms, servants’ quarters, and Western toilets under the assumption of a Western-oriented lifestyle. They were typically built away from the Chinese districts, in areas where *tong lau* were prohibited by zoning laws. There is a Chinese saying which illustrates the lifestyle associated with these buildings: “Live in a *yeung lau*, keep a Western dog” (*ju yeung lau, yeung fan gou*). The British colonial influence that shaped Hong Kong’s early *tong lau* typology—now designated with heritage status—and its subsequent progressions illustrates the racial class divisions inscribed within housing. Chinese inhabitants of the city as well as Chinese migrants from mainland China were set apart from wealthy British residents, similar to the discrimination which also shaped Canada’s Chinatowns.

As Hong Kong densified, the Canadian government discouraged migration through the Chinese Exclusion Act: Chinese migrants were charged a head tax starting in 1885, then were almost entirely banned from entry in 1923.²⁹ During the 24-year period of exclusion, most Chinese people in Canada lived in British Columbia due to previous economic opportunity. An economic low sparked mounting racial tensions, which led to the common belief that Chinese labourers were a “yellow peril”—a threat to white employment and Western civilization. This caused many Chinese people to move to Ontario, where there were fewer racially based restrictions.³⁰

At the time, Toronto’s Chinatown was a slum-like bachelor society segregated from the rest of the city [Fig. 1.17, 1.18]. Beyond limited signage, it did not have architectural features that distinguished it as “Chinese.” Dell Upton, an architectural historian who researches ethnicity and vernaculars, writes that as North American Chinese businesses were marketed to a predominantly Western audience, Chinatown became “a vector of what Chinese and non-Chinese thought that ‘Chinese’ should mean.”³¹ Buildings were adjusted in aesthetic and layout to market the idea of an ethnic “other,”



Fig. 1.15 *Queen's Road Central, Central District, Hong Kong Island* 皇后大道中, 1900, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong Public Libraries, PH67.5.

1912
Qing dynasty overthrown by the Republic of China
1914-1918
World War I

*migration to Canada
prevented*

1927-1949
Chinese civil war between the Kuomintang government and the Republic of China



Fig. 1.16 *Hong Kong, street scene*, Harrison Forman, c. 1941, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr200176.

1941-1945
Japan occupies Hong Kong during the Second Sino-Japanese War

1949
Communist closed door policy prevents remittances from Canada and emigration from mainland China

In Hong Kong

1900
Chinese head tax increases to \$100

1903
Chinese head tax increases to \$500



Fig. 1.17 *Mr. Lee Hong's laundry, 48 Elizabeth St*, 1912, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Sub-series 55, Item 43.

1923
Chinese Exclusion Act prevents admission of Chinese immigrants to Canada



Fig. 1.18 *56-58 Elizabeth Street*, 1937, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Sub-series 33, Item 171.

1939-1945
World War II

1947
Chinese relatives of Canadian citizens allowed entry, "paper sons" enter with forged documents

In Canada

In Chinese Canadian histories

32 Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian-American Differences," in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, *Keyworks in Cultural Studies* 6 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2003), 136.

33 Harry Con and Edgar Wickberg, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada, A History of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 245.

34 "Memories of Home - 50 Years of Public Housing in Hong Kong," Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2004, <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/aboutus/events/50yrsexhibition/highlights.html>.

35 "Memories of Home."

36 Con and Wickberg, *From China to Canada*, 231.

37 "Memories of Home."

which was both a distinguishing feature and a point of ongoing discrimination [Fig. 1.22]. Upton suggests that making home in a new country "includes practices that are partly inherited, partly modified, as well as partly invented; Asian-American culture also includes the practices that emerge in relation to the dominant representations that deny or subordinate Asian and Asian-American cultures as 'other.'"³²

In Canada, Chinese people represented an ethnic other, which was perceived to threaten the security of colonial national identity. As such, Chinatowns' changing identities were in relation to dominant structures of power, which determined their location and form.

Home is both distinguished and segregated by perceived identity.

Home as status: housing estates to the ethnoburbs

During the lengthy 1927-1949 Chinese civil war, Hong Kong was the main port for mainland Chinese to escape conflict.³³ Around 300,000 people who could not afford to live in *tong lau* squatted in precarious hillside settlements near Hong Kong Island and Kowloon [Fig. 1.19].³⁴ When a fire devastated the Shek Kip Mei squatter residences, the Hong Kong government constructed high-density "resettlement" estates to house squatters [Fig. 1.20]. The public housing estates first built to address the Shek Kip Mei crisis were six- to seven-storey concrete buildings designed in "I" or "H" shapes, allocating units with an average of 11 square metres for five adults to share.³⁵ These were hastily constructed and did not have electricity or running water.

During the 1960s, China's political chaos continued to overflow into Hong Kong. The inconsistent water supply from China's East River caused shortages in Hong Kong, and there were a series of riots influenced by the rise of communism in China.³⁶ Meanwhile, the population was steadily rising between Chinese migrants and Hong Kong's own post-war baby boom. In the following years, the government undertook an ambitious "Ten-Year Plan" to develop low-cost public housing with varying rental and ownership models, and to renovate the overcrowded conditions of earlier resettlement estates.³⁷ Other developments included "new towns" or satellite towns, which were self-sustaining clusters of high-rise buildings away from the city centre. The housing estate model was also adopted by private housing companies, which soon created economic disparity in the housing market as the government gave the

1958-1962

The Great Leap Forward in China sends an influx of migrants to Hong Kong

migration to Canada encouraged



Fig. 1.19 *Hong Kong, view of Shek Kip Mei squatter village built along hillside*, Harrison Forman, c. 1953, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr301962.



Fig. 1.20 *Hong Kong, view of Shek Kip Mei Estate public housing complex in New Kowloon*, Harrison Forman, c. 1953, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, fr301977.

Public housing built to accommodate migrants.

1971

The People's Republic of China (PRC) replaces the Republic of China in the UN

In Hong Kong

1962

Country of origin requirements removed from Canadian immigration

1967

Points-based immigration system implemented; Toronto becomes the largest destination for Chinese migrants



Fig. 1.21 *Corner of Spadina Ave. and Nassau St., looking south-west*, 1972, Toronto Archives, Fonds 2032, Series 841, File 47, Item 1.



Fig. 1.22 *Sam Hoa Food Company, south-west corner of Broadview and Gerrard*, 1975-1988, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 1465, File 383, Item 1.

In Canada

38 “Memories of Home.”

39 “Hong Kong’s Middle Class Priced out of the Housing Market,” *South China Morning Post*, June 2, 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/article/1523911/hong-kongs-middle-class-priced-out-housing-market>.

40 Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xwb93>.

41 Con and Wickberg, *From China to Canada*, 250.

42 For more on the points system, see “Immigration Regulations, Order-in-Council PC 1967-1616, 1967,” Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, accessed March 27, 2022, <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/immigration-regulations-order-in-council-pc-1967-1616-1967>.

43 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 127.

44 Chan, 127.

45 Chan, 112. Note that Toronto’s first Chinatown at Elizabeth St. and Dundas St. was demolished for the construction of the current Toronto City Hall.

46 Chan, 112.

private sector control over housing development.³⁸ As Hong Kong continued to densify and land prices skyrocketed, high economic status was soon a requirement to afford private home ownership, while the waitlist for public housing steadily grew.³⁹

For middle-class citizens in the 1960s, there were many objective reasons to look to Canada: political tensions were high in Hong Kong and many feared China would invade the colony.⁴⁰ Canadian post-secondary education facilitated citizenship, and was far less competitive compared to Hong Kong post-secondary institutions.⁴¹ Owning property and raising a family in Canada was not only affordable, but luxurious in terms of space [Fig. 1.25]. Many people had existing family connections to Canada through previous generations of migration that could facilitate their movement. And the Chinese Exclusion Act had just been repealed in favour of a points system that valued English language skills and education.⁴²

A new and diverse generation of movement to Canada from Hong Kong redefined what transnational belonging looked like. Toronto was a growing economic centre and the most popular destination for these migrants.⁴³ Arlene Chan, a Chinese Canadian historian who has written extensively on Toronto’s Chinatown, describes the incoming migrants:

The source of the largest number of newcomers was Hong Kong. The immigrants from this cosmopolitan city were completely different from the relatively homogenous group of the earlier Chinese born in villages, poorly educated, and lacking in English language skills. Rather, they tended to be well-educated, English-speaking people with a wide variety of skills and experience.⁴⁴

When Toronto’s first Chinatown was slated for demolition in the 1950s, people living there rallied to save portions of the original area and relocated Chinese businesses to Chinatown West [Fig. 1.26].⁴⁵ Through transnational networks, these migrants transformed Toronto’s Chinatown from a slum-like bachelor society into a bustling cultural hub. However, zoning laws prevented densification in the downtown core; real estate prices rose for increasingly crowded conditions, and the draw of the suburbs prompted newcomers to leave the city to find home.⁴⁶

Throughout the 1970s, people from Hong Kong invested in property notably in North York and Scarborough, and later in Markham.



Fig. 1.23 牛頭角下邨 (二區) *Lower Ngau Tau Kok (II) Estate*, Baycrest Wikipedia user - CC-BY-SA-2.5, 2008, Wikimedia Commons.

Public housing gets taller.



Fig. 1.25 *An aerial view of housing developments near Markham, Ontario*, IDuke, 2005, Wikimedia Commons.

1978

The Chinese Open Door Policy allows Western access to the Chinese market, spurs Chinese education in Western countries



Fig. 1.24 *Shanghai Street, Hong Kong*, Keith Macgregor, 1984.



Fig. 1.26 *Chinatown on Spadina or Dundas[?]*, 1973-1987, Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 1465, File 759, Item 2.

1984

Sino-British Joint Declaration states that Hong Kong will return to Chinese rule in 1997, sparking mass emigration and heritage conservation laws for tong lau & yeung lau

migration to Canada encouraged

In Hong Kong

1986

Business investor program grants landed immigrant status to anyone with \$500,000 as long as they invest \$250,000 in business ventures

In Canada

47 Chan, 155.

48 Wei Li, "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles," *Urban Studies* 35, no. 3 (March 1, 1998): 479, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098984871>.

49 Erica Allen-Kim, "Condos in the Mall: Suburban Transnational Typological Transformations in Markham, Ontario: The Transnational Turn in Urban History," in *Making Cities Global: The Transnational Turn in Urban History* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

50 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 153.

51 Allen-Kim, "Condos in the Mall: Suburban Transnational Typological Transformations in Markham, Ontario: The Transnational Turn in Urban History," 136.

52 Allen-Kim, 137.

53 Allen-Kim, "Condos in the Mall: Suburban Transnational Typological Transformations in Markham, Ontario: The Transnational Turn in Urban History."

The development of Scarborough's Dragon Centre Mall, the first indoor Chinese mall in North America, marked the rise of the "ethnoburb."⁴⁷ Social geographer and migration scholar Wei Li defines ethnoburbs as "suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large... metropolitan areas. They are multi-ethnic communities in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration but does not necessarily comprise a majority."⁴⁸ Despite opposition from the predominantly white suburban population who saw their rural lifestyle threatened, the ethnoburbs drew an ethnic urban exodus by allowing middle-class economic migrants to access the luxury of space afforded by single-family homes.

One route to this lifestyle was through investment in a condo mall: a dense multi-unit commercial building typology, a landing place for new immigrants' small businesses, and a transnational social space.⁴⁹ A few notable examples of condo-malls include the Chinatown Centre in the downtown core [Fig. 1.29], and the Pacific Mall in Markham [Fig. 1.30]. When the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 issued that Hong Kong would return to Chinese rule in 1997, Canada saw a significant influx in Hong Kong business investors with concerns about living under communism.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the Canadian Immigrant Investor Program (CANIIP) established in 1986 allowed investors to gain landed immigration status, so long as they invested in Canadian business ventures.⁵¹

Erica Allen-Kim, a Toronto-based historian of modern architecture and design, notes that the condo-mall typology proliferated in the Greater Toronto Area after 1986—and developers adjusted the price of a condo-mall unit to the minimum investment price of the CANIIP program.⁵² Allen-Kim suggests that the condo-mall provided a site for ethnic economies to flourish as a "highly visible site of ethnicity, politics, everyday tourism, and cultural community that negotiates between mainstream and ethnic consumption and business practices."⁵³ The ethnoburbs influenced relationships to home as a suburban ideal that is also connected to transnational businesses and communities.

Home is a signifier of status and a vehicle for migration.



Fig. 1.27 *Causeway Bay Sharp Street East Shops*, Drairmedpi Boilga, 2021, Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 1.29 *Chinatown Centre Mall, 222 Spadina Avenue*, Greg Stacey (Greg's Southern Ontario Flickr), 2017, Flickr.

1997
Hong Kong Handover



Fig. 1.28 *Lake Silver Private Housing Estate*, Fat Chong, 2011, Wikimedia Commons.

Private housing gets taller.



Fig. 1.30 *Pacific Mall*, Mike Tigas, 2006, Wikimedia Commons.

2019
Pro-democracy protests sparked by an extradition bill with the PRC

In Hong Kong

In Canada

54 Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (March 2002): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435628>.

55 See Fig. 1.17 and Fig. 1.18 in the migration timeline.

56 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto*, 217.

Hong Kong Canadian homes

Throughout a history of migration, political and socio-economic forces influenced the site, aesthetic, perception, and function of Hong Kong Canadian networks of home. While historical narratives provide useful context, they inevitably present the past from a specific and limited perspective. Historical geographer Joan Schwartz and historian Terry Cook critique historic archives as powerful constructs "in the business of identity politics" which validate specific notions of identity over others.⁵⁴ For example, many of the historical images related to Chinese Canadians in the City of Toronto Archives were taken for purposes that benefit a colonial agenda, such as surveying required to demolish Toronto's first Chinatown.⁵⁵ No historical narrative can be universal or objectively truthful, and historical records tend to glance over sites of diasporic memory.

What narratives can be accessed through memory that are not present in national or institutional records? This research tests a process to generate knowledge about diasporic architectures from unheard voices, as a multifaceted and valid form of architectural history. I believe that Hong Kong Canadian histories of migration not only carry through into the present but have the potential to shape inclusionary futures of home. So, I invited Hong Kong Canadians to talk about their homes with me.

Eligibility for this study involved three criteria: people who moved from Hong Kong to Canada between 1955-1975; people who resided in the Greater Toronto Area; and people who could communicate verbally in either English or Cantonese. This period follows the 1947 removal of "country of origin" requirements from migration policy, which allowed family members of existing Chinese Canadians to enter Canada. It also captures the 1967 introduction of the immigration points system, which considers more equitable factors such as language, education, and economic status. During this period, Toronto's city and suburbs were the most popular destination for migrants from Hong Kong.⁵⁶ I used these criteria to engage the cosmopolitan and diverse people who came to Canada from Hong Kong with the agency to shape their own homes.

2019
COVID-19 pandemic begins

2020
National Security Law (NSL) implemented in Hong Kong to quell protests

*migration to Canada
encouraged*

2020
Canada encourages migration from Hong Kong with facilitated work permit and permanent residence programs

2021
Canada sets a record for the highest number of new immigrants in a single year

2022
The COVID-19 Omicron variant spreads rapidly through Hong Kong with a high death rate per capita, prompting emigration

“Whether over ideas or feelings, actions or transactions, the choice of what to record and the decision over what to preserve, and thereby privilege, occur within socially constructed, but now naturalized frameworks that determine the significance of what becomes archives.”

—Joan Schwarz & Terry Cook, 2002, “Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* no. 2: 3.

As research site

57 I've included responses from two other people, who participated only in certain parts of the project, in the appendix.

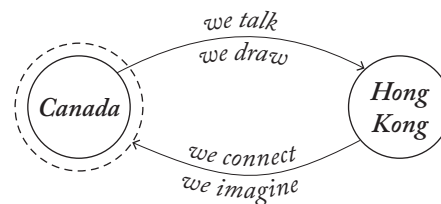
58 See appendix for results.

This thesis presents five conversations about remembered and imagined homes.⁵⁷ The recruitment process involved reaching out to Chinese community organizations and personal networks in the Greater Toronto Area. People were invited to complete a survey about significant spaces in their childhood home in Hong Kong and their current home in Canada.⁵⁸ Through a series of one-on-one phone interviews, we drew and annotated floor plans of these homes based on memories, stories, and historical databases. We then proposed an imagined design change to the current home to reflect on its ongoing role as a place of embedded memories, inhabitations, and dreams.

This methodology targets the question: what elements of a Hong Kong Canadian home create a sense of belonging, and how do they connect individual pasts with imagined futures?

Fig. 1.31 *Methodology diagram*, by author.

Showing the four components to the methodology of this project: we talk, we draw, we connect, we imagine.



We talk

59 While the world is locked down and travel is not possible, this was a very effective (and fun) form of research.

60 Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (Psychology Press, 2005).

61 Sarah Pink, "Design, Ethnography and Homes," in *Making Homes: Ethnography and Design*, Home (London ; Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017).

62 Marie Stender, "Towards an Architectural Anthropology—What Architects Can Learn from Anthropology and Vice Versa," *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2016.1256333>.

We enter the past through a 60-minute one-on-one phone interview, to establish context for a childhood home in Hong Kong.

Without physically traveling anywhere, places are accessible through memory—a highly subjective and revealing site of fieldwork.⁵⁹ Talking to people is a form of ethnographic research, which captures firsthand accounts of activity through interviews, observation, and listening.⁶⁰ Migration scholars often employ ethnographic methods of "using the past to illuminate the present," examining the home as a site of intimate ritual and cultural transfer to learn more about people and culture.⁶¹ Ethnographic methods explore crucial dimensions of life, such as memory and feeling, and can provide embodied perspectives through participatory forms of research.

As design fields work to engage local and social contexts, it's necessary to talk with people involved to dispel embedded cultural biases.⁶² Nishat Awan, an architect and researcher in geopolitics, writes on the importance of spatial processes that involve people who aren't architects. In her work on spatial agency, Awan builds

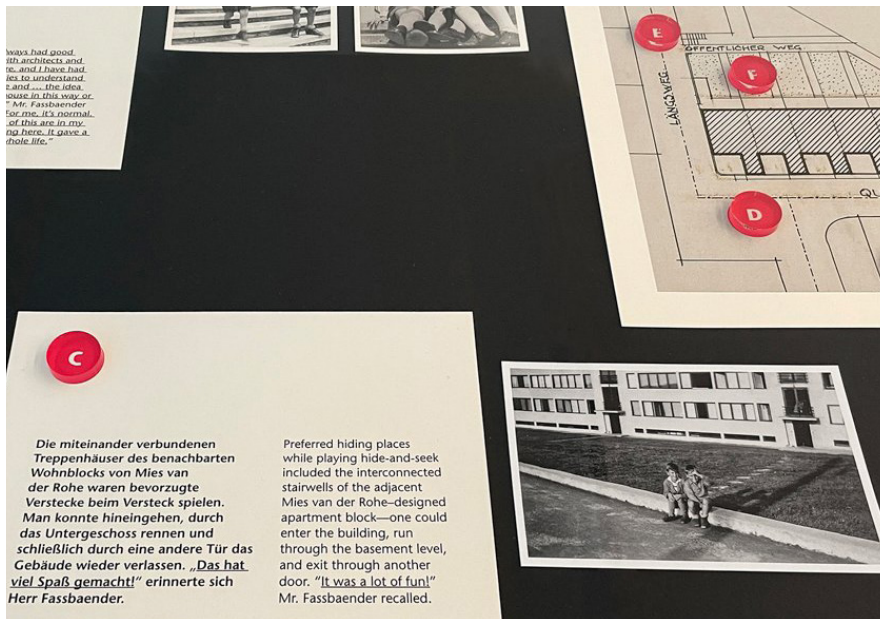


Fig. 1.32 *Growing Up Modern Exhibition*, Julia Jamrozik and Coryn Kempster, 2021, <http://www.ck-jj.com/growing-up-modern-exhibition>.

Specific stories correspond to how people inhabited different areas of famous Modernist buildings.

on sociologist and phenomenological theorist Anthony Giddens’ concept of “mutual knowledge:”

Mutual knowledge implies openness as to what may contribute to spatial production, so that the instinct of the amateur is accepted as having equal potential as the established methods of the supposed ‘expert’... Thus stories (which can be shared) are as productive as drawings (which often exclude the non-expert), and actions are privileged as much as things.⁶³

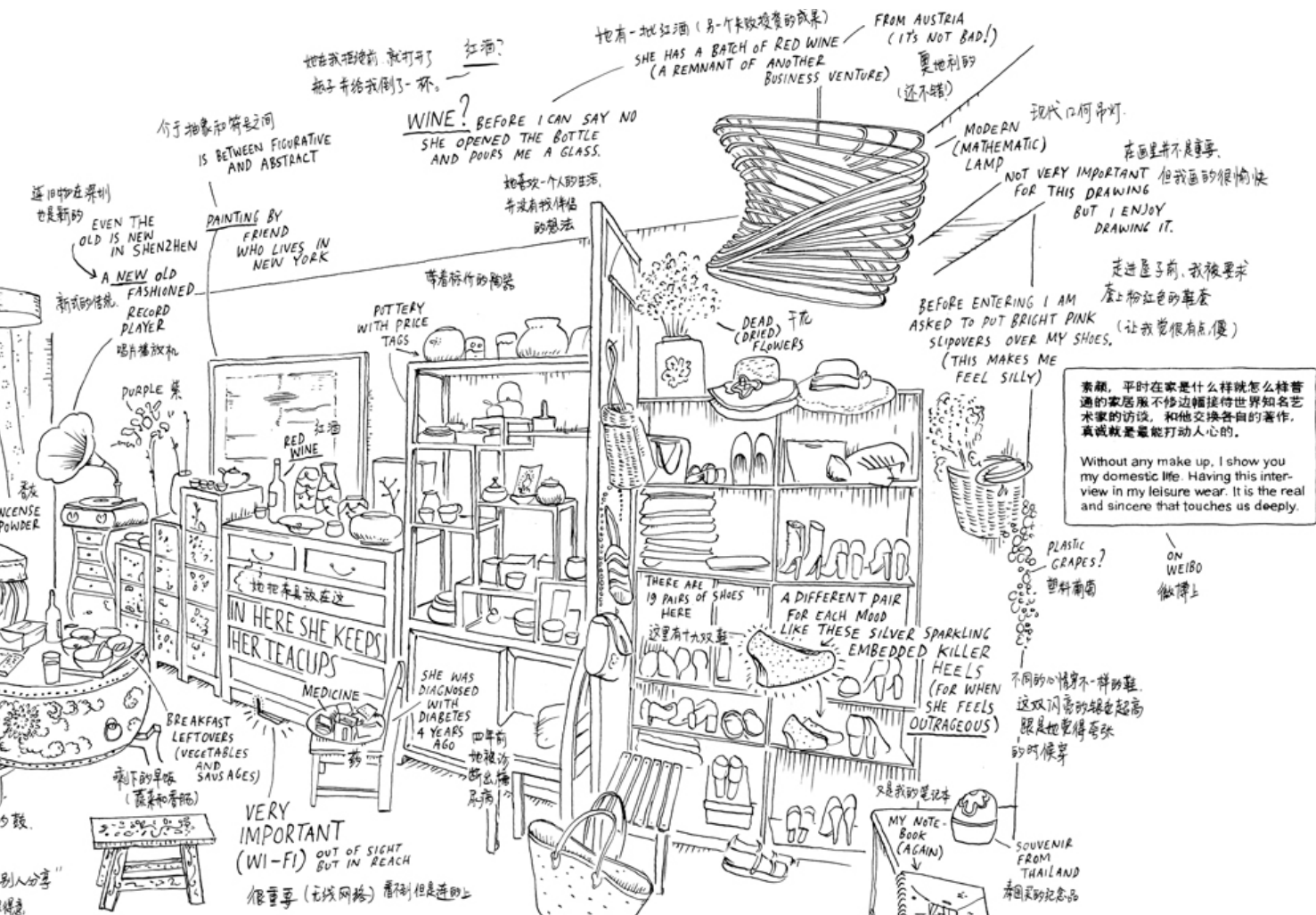
Awan argues that by valuing peoples’ implicit understandings of their own histories, we level the extremes of the “expert-amateur dichotomy,” in which the knowledge gap between architects and non-architects grows increasingly distant as professions become more specialized.⁶⁴

Architects and artists Julia Jamrozik and Coryn Kempster amplified the voices of non-architects through an oral history initiative entitled *Growing Up Modern* [Fig. 1.32]. They interviewed now-elderly people who grew up in iconic European Modernist buildings about how they inhabited those buildings—often in ways which were not intended by the architects.⁶⁵ Through this methodology, Jamrozik and Kempster’s initiative captured oral histories as a form of architectural preservation. What potential does this process hold to reveal narratives about everyday homes as important sites of diasporic memory?

63 Nishat Awan, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2011).

64 Awan.

65 For example, children playing in the stairwell of Le Corbusier’s famous residential building, the Unité d’Habitation. Julia Jamrozik, “Growing Up Modern – Oral History as Architectural Preservation,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 72, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 284–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2018.1496735>.



longitude and latitude, do not account for temporality, touch, memory, relations, stories and narratives—in fact it is experience that is altogether removed.⁶⁷

67 Nishat Awan, *Diasporic Agencies: Mapping the City Otherwise*, 1st edition (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2016), 117.

Although they do not typically appear in architectural drawings, memory and stories are important parts of how people experience and communicate space. Drawing from these dimensions, Artist Jan Rothuizen visually represents narratives of Chinese homes in his *Shenzhen* exhibition [Fig. 1.33]. Rothuizen met with three strangers who invited him into their homes. He compiled their conversations about objects, worldviews, preferences, and activities into an annotated experiential drawing, revealing components of home unseen except through conversation.

My research experiments similarly with plan and perspective drawing and annotation to collaboratively visualize memory in relation to space. I invite non-architects to draw lived experiences as experts on their own homes, working outside of dominant modes of architectural representation and generating a collection of personal truths that carry spatial authority.

68 Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification," 316.

69 Tolia-Kelly, 325.

70 Sarah Pink, *Home Truths: Gender, Domestic Objects and Everyday Life*, English ed. (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 58.

71 Pink, "Design, Ethnography and Homes."

We connect

In another 60-minute phone interview, we talk and draw again to establish the context for a current home. We discuss connections between Hong Kong and Canada, such as transnational routines, spatial preferences, and objects.

Although separated by distance and time, this research argues that peoples' childhood homes are visible in some way within their present-day contexts. What connections can be made to a childhood home in Hong Kong?

Tolia-Kelly describes "re-memory" as "memory that is encountered in the everyday, but is not always a recall or reflection of actual experience" whose "re-inscription in the environment is a political force, countering exclusionary heritage discourses, providing a form of synthesized embodied heritage."⁶⁸ Through interviews with British-Asian women, she mapped their routes to Britain, discussed objects that were important to them, and toured their houses. Tolia-Kelly examines material dimensions of the British-Asian home as curated collections of values that directly connect migrants to different geographies and temporalities.⁶⁹

My research identifies elements of re-memory within Hong Kong Canadian homes to centre overlooked sites of diasporic memory within architectural discourse.

We imagine

Building on our previous conversations, we propose an imagined design change to the current house. Through back-and-forth correspondence, we discuss the speculative design change in plan and I represent it experientially in a perspective drawing.

Even as it emerges in conversation, memory is always changing. Sarah Pink, a social scientist and design anthropologist, states that "as a forever incomplete project, home is never completely realised materially, but instead exists partially in one's imagination as a series of constantly developing dreams or plans."⁷⁰ Pink's research revolves around "design ethnography," advocating that understanding peoples' pasts provides opportunity to inform future design work [Fig. 1.34].⁷¹ For example, how can designers reconcile the intended function of spaces with their actual use? What kind of transnational routines inform energy or water usage in the home?



Fig. 1.34 *Laundry Lives* film clip, Sarah Pink and Nadia Astari, 2015, <https://www.laundrylives.com/>.

Interviewing middle-class Indonesians people about their home routines involving laundry.

Centring non-architects as stakeholders within architectural design processes is key to effective design. Architecture groups such as atelier d’architecture autogérée, Exyzt, Lacaton & Vassal, and Public Works challenge top-down design decisions through local collaboration and long-term engagement. Through processes like participatory design and community interviews, these groups exemplify ways of imagining possibilities collaboratively.

A proposed floor plan is somewhere between a dream and a material reality: a possibility of what comes next. Having created floor plans together of what we presume to have existed then, and now, how does this process change the way that people reimagine their homes?⁷² It might be a small-scale design change which imitates a certain spatial condition from the past, like the brightness or the size of a space. Maybe it’s expanding a room to create a more comfortable gathering area for friends and family. Or maybe there’s nothing that participants would rather change about their homes.

This research combines the spatial tools of the architect with the stories of diasporic people to produce shared knowledge on how people remember and imagine home, experimenting with a collaborative engagement methodology that moves away from top-down decision-making in typical design processes.

72 Note that this emphasis on homes then and now is used as a tool to provide contrast and does not mean to erase the multiple other homes people have inhabited in the distance between the two.

73 “About,” Department of Public Memory, December 17, 2013, <http://departmentofpublicmemory.com/about/>.

74 “Dragon Centre Stories,” accessed March 26, 2022, <https://dragoncentrestories.ca/>.

Collecting stories of movement

As diasporas continue to find home in Canada, it is important to engage with how these historic and emerging demographics negotiate spatial belonging. What kind of spaces tie into a diasporic understanding of home?

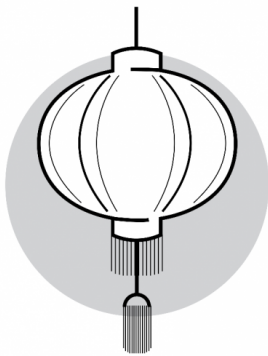
An art collective called the Department of Public Memory (DPM) asks a similar question: what does the city of Toronto forget? They collect and display community stories, images, and objects related to under-represented sites of memory.⁷³ For example, they discuss the Oriole Community Gardens, a community organizing space predominantly run by migrants to address food scarcity. Within their online database, the gardens are linked to an image of a bamboo steamer and a quotation from someone using the gardens to grow food [Fig. 1.35]. The DPM displays these collections of interconnected sites through workshops, exhibitions, public signage, and online documentation. In capturing elements that the city overlooks, this art collective reveals the diasporic agency embedded within Toronto’s public memory.

Led by several groups including community volunteers and architects, the Dragon Centre Stories initiative documented peoples’ stories about the Dragon Centre mall [Fig. 1.36].⁷⁴ The mall was a huge success as a landing site for immigrants in the 1980s and a place to find connections to home through food and shopping. Its popularity sparked tensions with the white communities in Scarborough, as mall visitors filled up parking spots in the previously quiet neighbourhood. When it was slated for redevelopment in 2019, Dragon Centre Stories celebrated the mall as an international meeting place and recognized it as a node of contention between white spaces and other spaces. Presenting the public’s stories about the mall alongside its history, the initiative documented a transnational space anchored within collective memory.



Fig. 1.35 Sign about migration from *Traces of Care Series*, Department of Public Memory, 2018, aluminum and vinyl, 12x18 in, <http://departmentofpublicmemory.com/portfolio/artifact-9738-migration/>.

Stories | 慶龍中心的故事



Memories

By Maria Cheung

On Fridays my Dad would pick me up after school and would take me to Dragon Centre as he worked around the corner at Trustwell Realty that was in the adjacent building. This was around 1990 and onward when I was 10 years old. I would beg him to take me to the bakery to...

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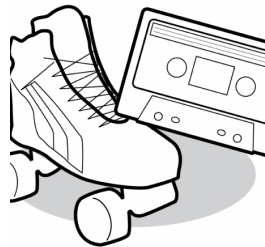
Fig. 1.36 *Stories*, Dragon Centre Stories, 2019, <https://dragoncentrestories.ca/stories/>.



Trust

By Michael Vu

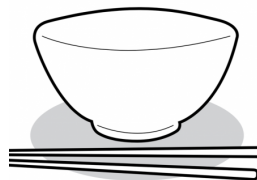
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Roller Rinks and Magnetic Tapes

By John Dean

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Growing Up + Rapid Growth

By Carianne Leung

> [Read Story | 閱讀故事](#)

By collecting stories of movement through *talking, drawing, connecting, and imagining*, this thesis records diasporic knowledge of home. To summarize, this research tests a process for generating mutual knowledge that addresses dominant Western processes embedded in the architectural discipline:

1. To question architectural histories by collecting “other” historical narratives
2. To question architectural representation by visualizing lived experiences
3. To question architectural discourse by exploring overlooked sites of diasporic memory
4. To question architectural design processes by testing memory-based collaborative design

The importance of this research is in bridging gaps between distinct contexts, scales, and times. The following section provides multiple intergenerational and transnational perspectives on a diverse group of migrants, whose made homes contributed to the historical development of Canada’s cities and suburbs. I hope that these perspectives will continue to push the design field towards better communication between designers and diasporic people to both record histories of movement, and to mobilize diasporic knowledge within design fields.

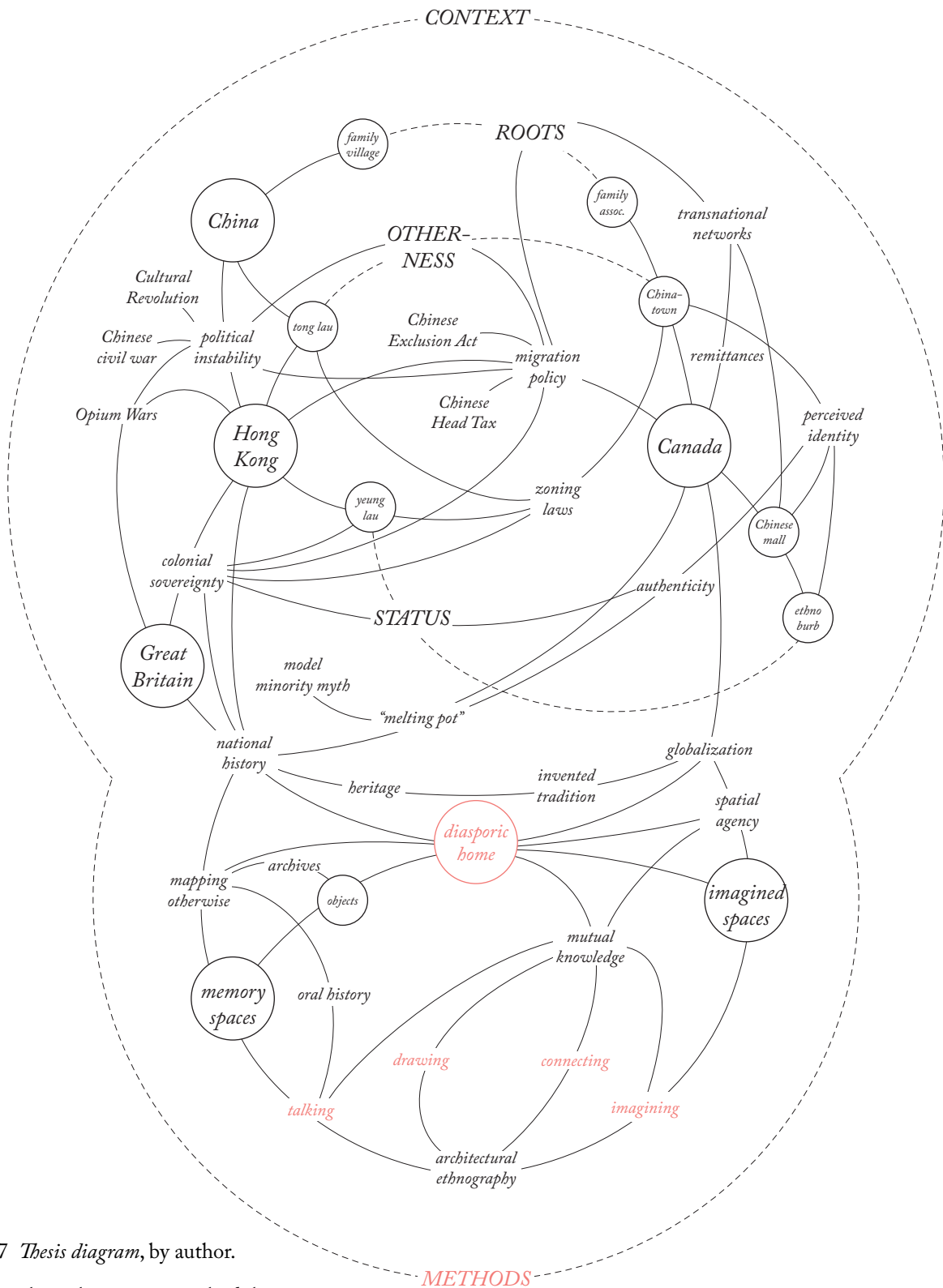


Fig. 1.37 Thesis diagram, by author.

Showing where this project methodology engages with the project context.

Sample interview questions on Canada

These questions about the layout of your home will help me draw floor plans, and understand what elements of architecture are important to an idea of home. In visualizing proposals to change each home, we'll explore how they reflect transnational elements of home.

- Let's review the floor plans together. Is the entrance in the right location?
- Are the bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen in the right spot?
- Are any rooms missing?
- Can you indicate where the windows are in the plan?
- Please email me any other information you want to share to help me draw.
- What area of the Greater Toronto Area do you currently live in?
- What kind of building is it?
- What is the most important space in your current home?
- How many people live in your house? How are they related to you?
- What objects did you bring with you from Hong Kong when you came to Canada, and why?
- What is your daily routine? Are you employed?
- What is the most important event within your current home, and how do you celebrate?
- Do you live close to any significant places, such as your favourite restaurant, a cinema, or a mall?
- What was the most significant difference between Hong Kong and Canada?
- Based on our previous conversations, is there anything you would change about your current home to make it more familiar, more practical, or more exciting?

Sample interview questions on Hong Kong

These questions will help me search through historic databases for relevant information, such as the building shape and neighbourhood building styles. Questions about family size, hobbies, and celebrations help me understand how these factors shaped experiences of home.

- What area of Hong Kong did you grow up in?
- What kind of building was it?
- What do you remember most about your childhood home?
- How many people lived in your house? How were they related to you?
- What was your daily routine?
- What was the most important event within the home, and how did you celebrate?
- Did you live close to any significant places, such as your school, your favourite restaurant, or a cinema?
- Where did you spend the most time in the house?
- Did you have any pets or animals in the house? Where did you keep them?
- For me to reference historic databases, do you know the address of your childhood home?
- Can you walk me through the building?
- How many bedrooms were there? Did you share a room?
- Was there any outdoor space, such as a courtyard or a balcony? What was it used for?
- Is there anything you liked/disliked about the architecture of your childhood home? i.e., was it too large or too small? Too hot or too cold? Were there enough windows?
- What year did you leave Hong Kong, and what were the reasons that influenced you to move?

2

Drawing Conversations

On five conversations about home between Hong Kong and Canada, which describe movement in relation to belonging and stories in relation to histories.

“Students often rationalize their shyness of new situations by saying it is unethical to intrude where they are not wanted... In general, people like talking about themselves, and they particularly like it when others seem genuinely interested in what they do.”

—Galen Cranz, 2016, *Ethnography for Designers*, 45.

For context

Everyone who participated in this study is given a code name for anonymity. I've called them each respectively "Aunty" and "Uncle" because in Chinese culture this is how we refer to people who are older than us, regardless of relation, as a sign of familiarity and respect. This project features conversations with a total of five Aunties and Uncles.

This section of the document uses colour to distinguish between different voices within each conversation, and different authors within a single drawing. Here's an example of how the conversation transcripts and drawings are colour coded [Fig. 2.1].

mainland China

Windsor, ON



Ottawa, ON

Montréal, QC

Fig. 2.2 *Victoria Harbour: Hong Kong and New Territory*, Great Britain War Office, 1930, National Library of Australia.

1km

Maps showing where each participant lived in Hong Kong, and what region they currently inhabit in Canada.

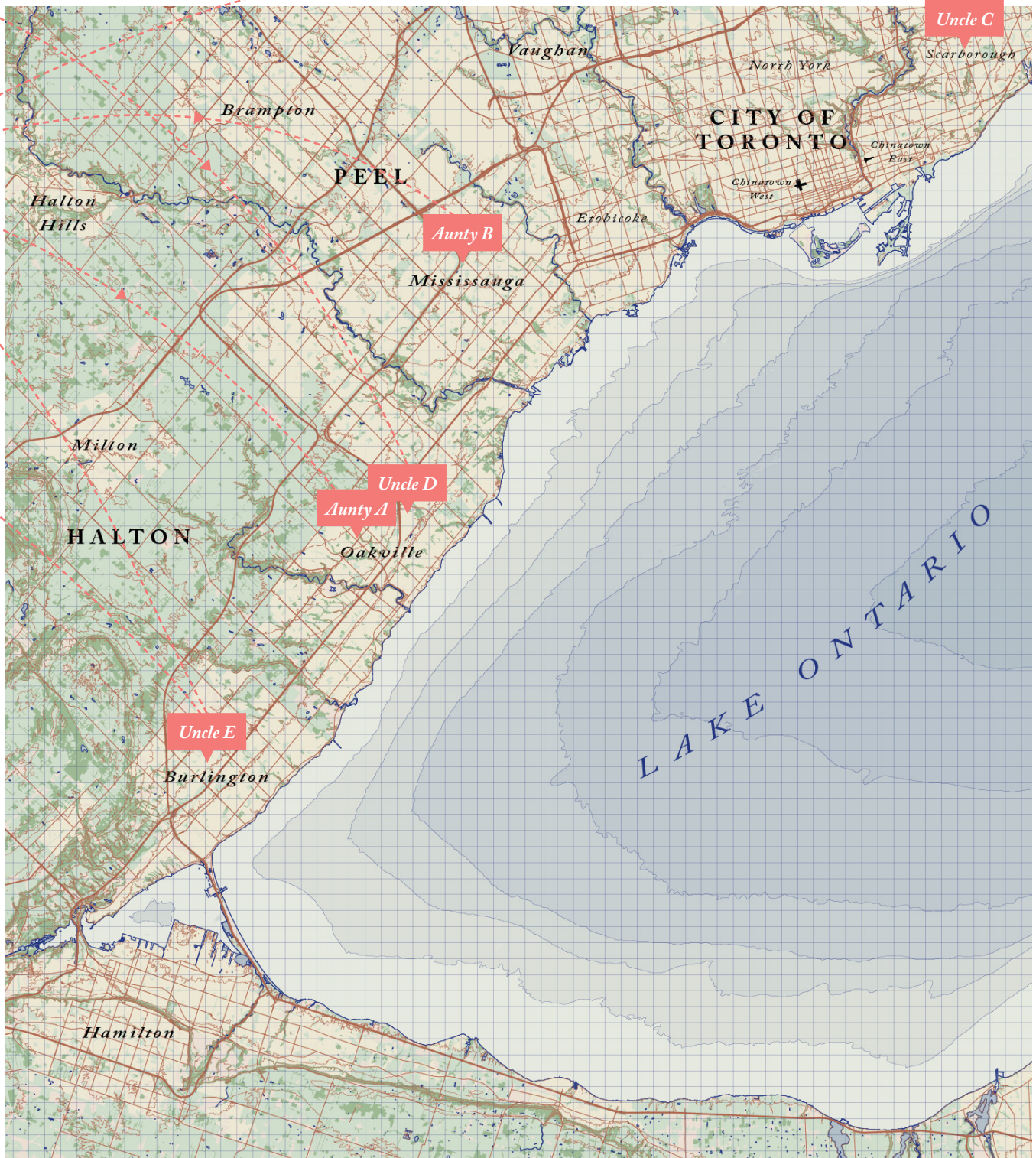


Fig. 2.3 Map of Toronto, 2022, image by author.

1km

- ▶ Direction of migration
- Residence not in Hong Kong or the GTA

1960

In Hong Kong

*1 Kwong Wah St
Kowloon, Hong Kong*

*Bungalow within a laundry
compound*

*7 people in the bungalow (6 family
members, 1 servant) and 10
people in the compound (7 family
members, 2 servants)*

Aunty A spent the most time in the orchard. It was her safe haven within the industrial bounds of the laundry compound, where she climbed trees and picked fruit. Today, the site of the compound is covered in condo buildings. Her fond memories of the orchard contrast sharply with her stories of the Japanese occupation of the laundry compound during WWII, and the ghost stories told of the people who died there, rumoured to still linger around the compound's tall smokestack.

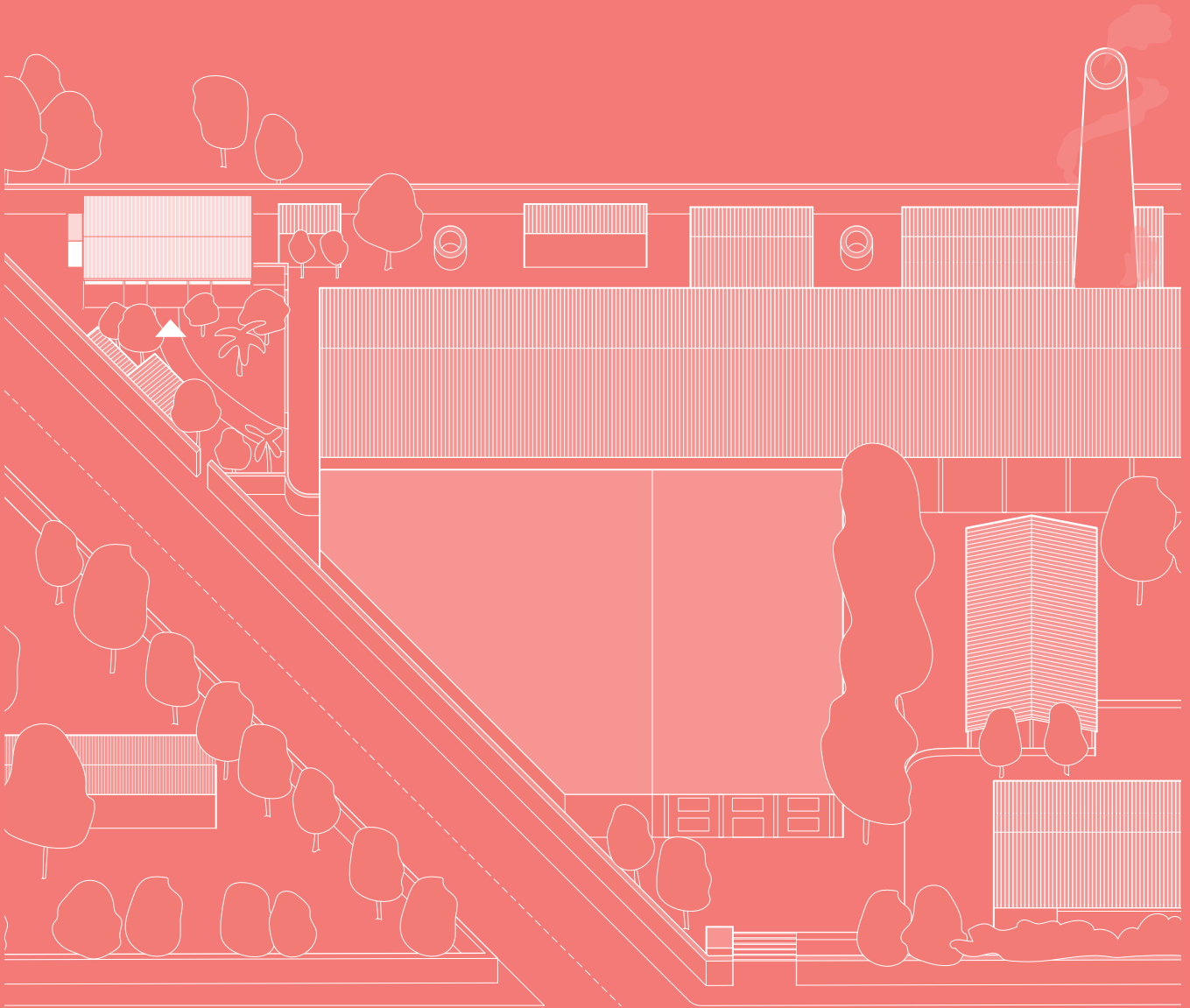


Fig. A.1 *Aunty A's home in Kowloon*, image by author.

In her current home, Aunty A enjoys spending time in the dining room, where she can look into the garden in the backyard. In the adjacent sunroom she grows and propagates various plant life, from orchids to poinsettias to roots and spices. When asked what she would change about her current house, Aunty A suggested to turn all the walls into bookshelves so she could be surrounded by knowledge; and to expand the sunroom to have Chinese hotpot dinner together with her family.

*Oakville
Ontario, Canada*

Bungalow

1 person

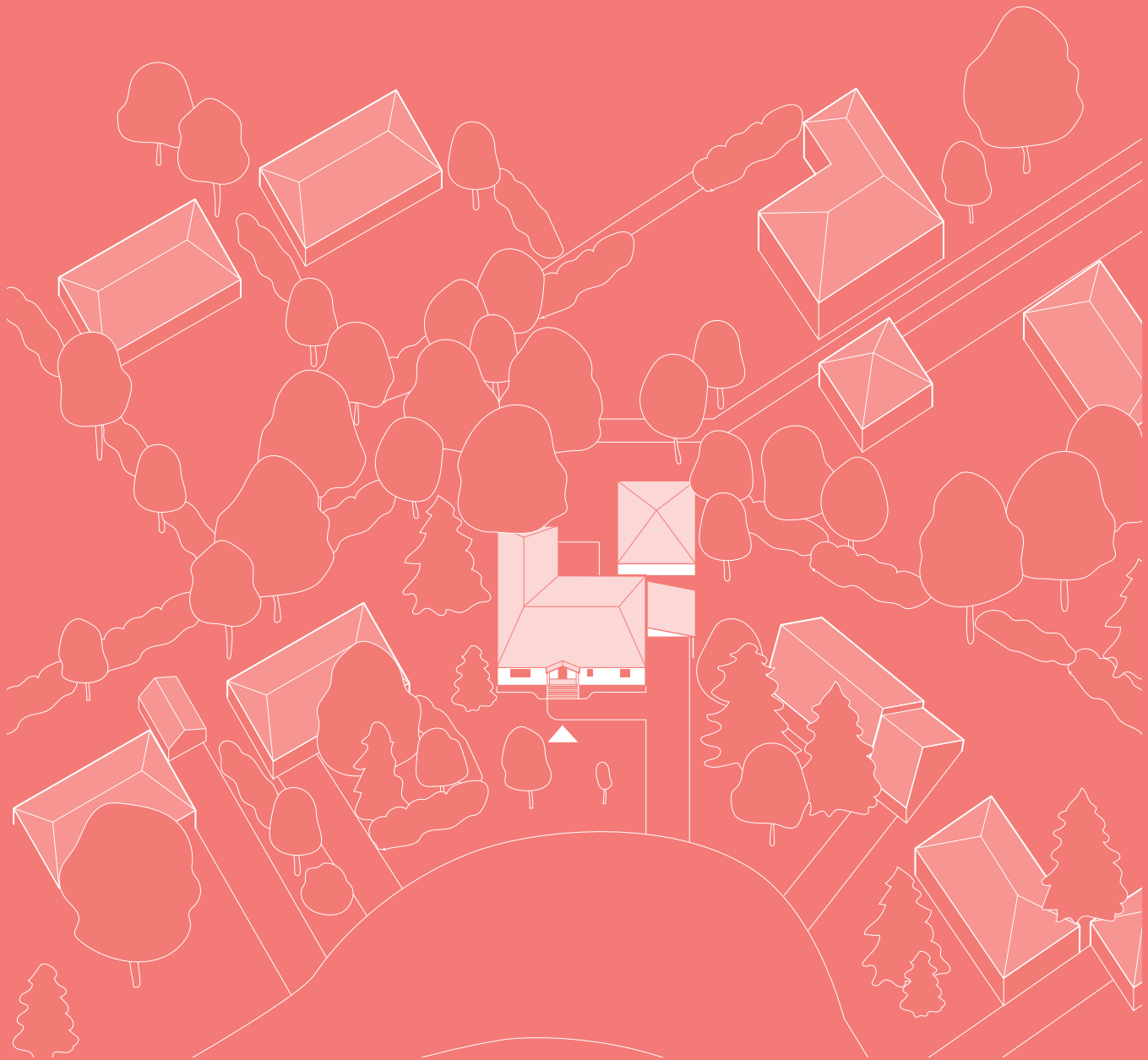


Fig. A.2 *Aunty A's home in Oakville*, image by author.

1960

1 Kwong Wah Street

Kowloon, Hong Kong

Natalie:

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Aunty A:

It was just a bungalow at the corner of the laundry business buildings. Most significant was the space I was free to roam... especially the gardens.



Fig. A.3 *The family in front of the laundry compound, image provided by Aunty A.*

“This was taken on the day of my departure to London in 1960. Dad was on my right and mom was on the left of me.”

Fig. A.4 *Kwong Wah Hospital*, c. 1911,
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals.

This image focuses on the Kwong Wah Hospital, but the laundry compound smokestack is visible in the background.

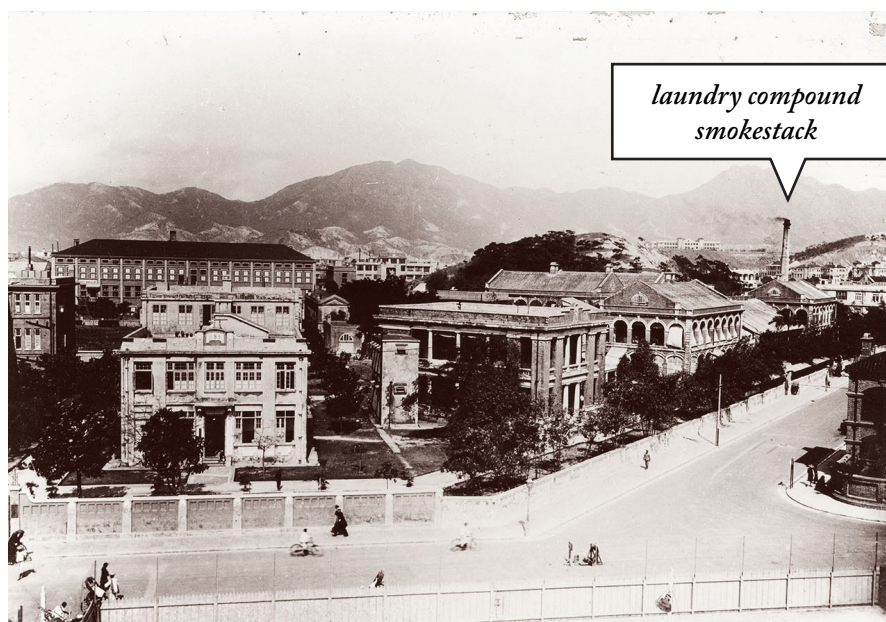




Fig. A.5 Kowloon Peninsula: 1947, Hong Kong Crown Lands & Survey Office, National Library of Australia, MAP Braga Collection Col./81.

Can you tell me more about where you grew up in Hong Kong?

The Steam Laundry Co. was on 1 Kwong Wah Street. But unfortunately it was sold in 1963 and now the ground that I spent so much time playing and swinging on the old Guava tree is covered with tall concrete buildings. We used to be next door to the Kwong Wah Hospital. In those days my grandfather owned the whole street.

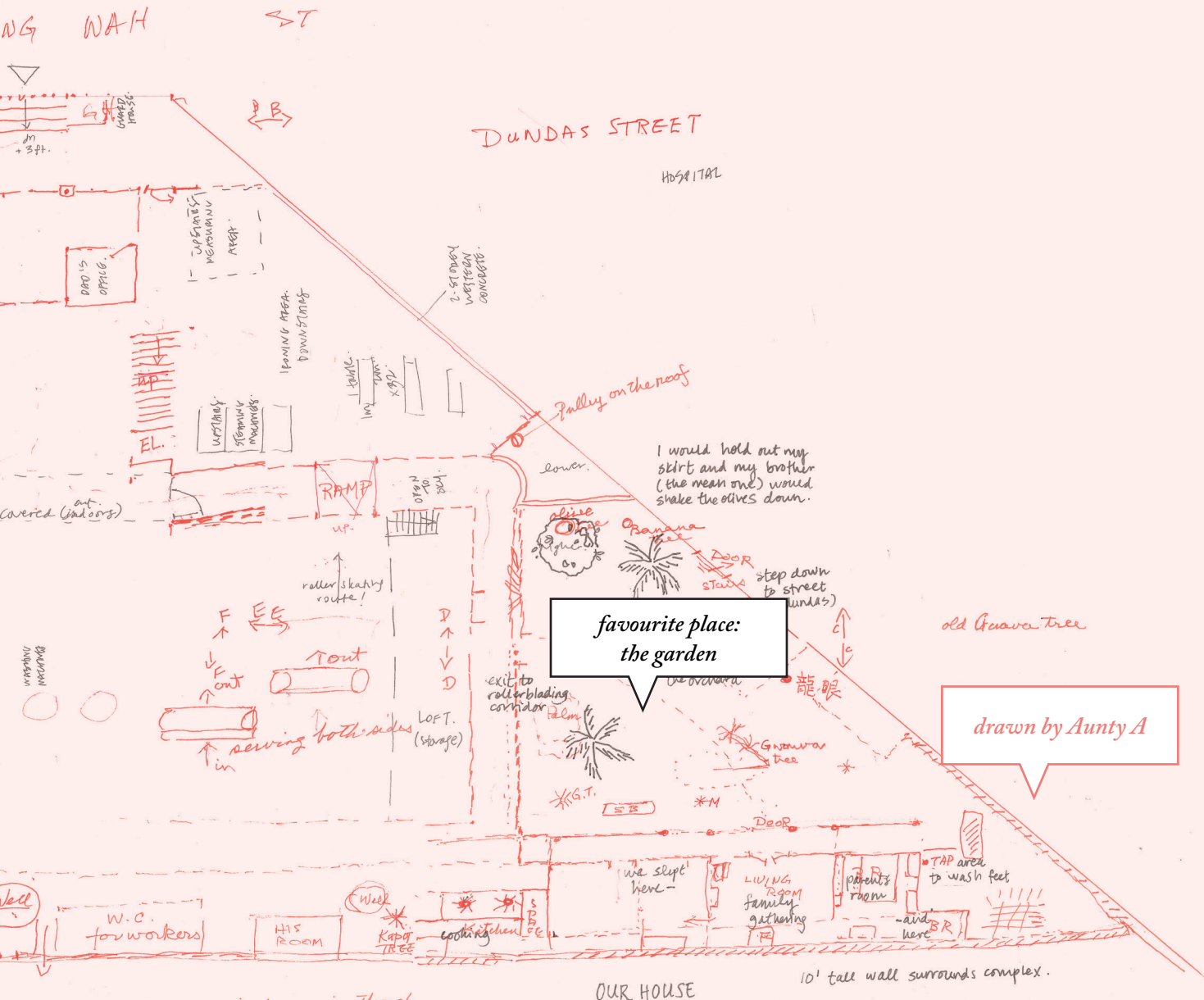
Would you be able to draw a map? We can talk through it together.

I'll see what I can do.



Aerial of laundry compound in 1949, 歷史時空 Tsewaii Society & Culture Website.

This colorized image of the Kwong Wah hospital annotates the laundry smokestack and nearby hill. In public online databases, it's common to find images like this which colour code and label key features.



well from the chemical seeping through
 are purchase to guard. We sometimes
 to play with them. they would
 this was purchased the new
 development house a welding company
 + Battery manufacture. The chemical
 was poured into the ground contaminating
 our well.

What about the family, what were their roles?

Mom was a seamstress, she was very, very smart. She had to give the laundry back to the customer, folded in paper. But first she had to do the measuring—then you wash it, and then you steam the clothes to make them the right length again after they shrink. They had to cut off the buttons and label them, wash and dry, and then re-sew the buttons.

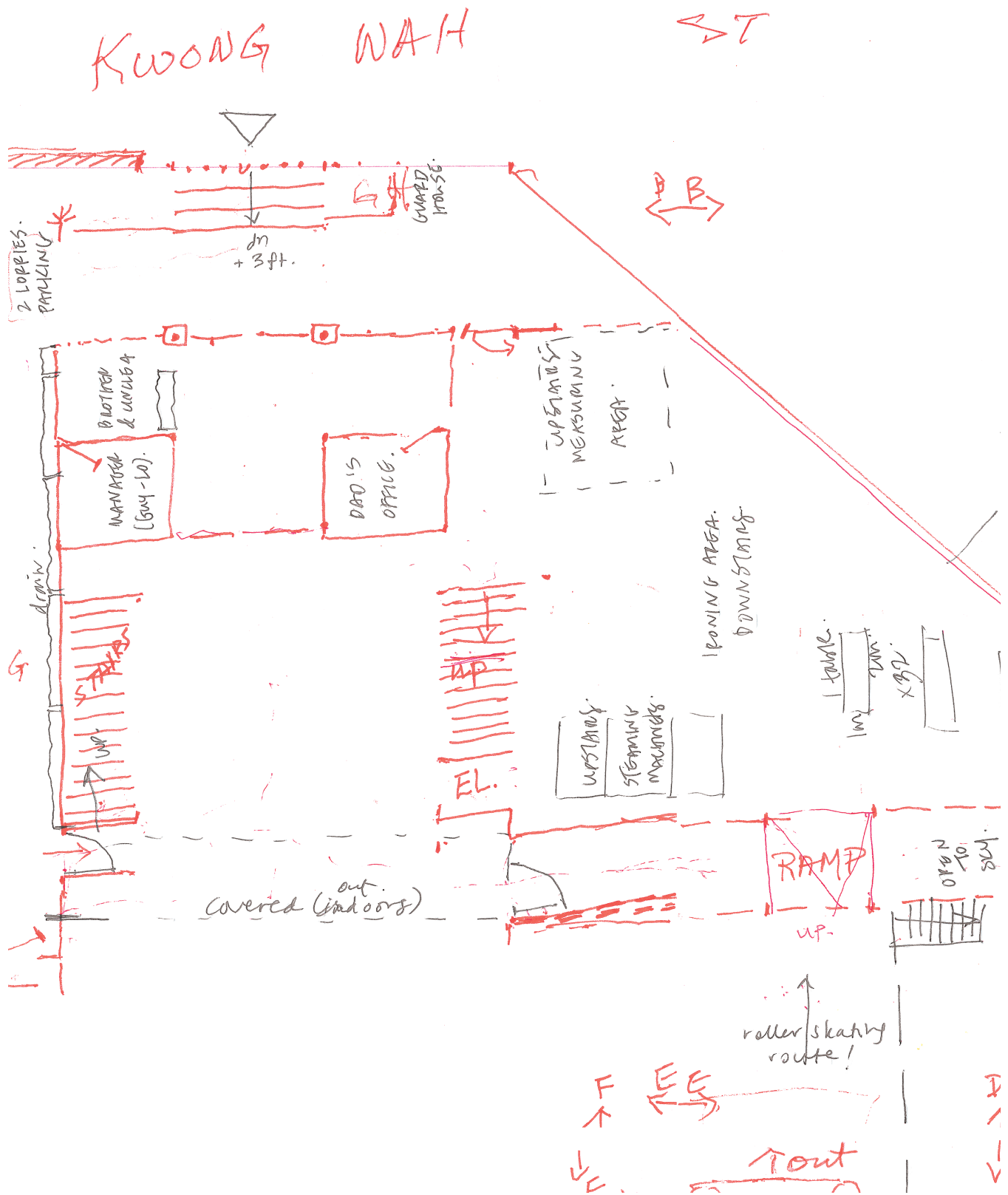


Fig. A.7 Ironing area, image by Aunty A and author.

Clothing was brought to the ironing area tables, where it was stretched back to their original measurements and the buttons were re-sewn.

*There were a lot of creative ways of keeping ghosts away after the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, where buildings including businesses and schools would put up images of warriors or other historic figures to frighten ghosts away.

Could you see the chimney from far away?

At that time it was the tallest structure in Kowloon. That chimney was providing hot water for the laundry six days a week. I was told it was a hundred feet tall. And the worker taking care of that job claimed he saw a ghost during his lunch break, so he put up a picture of the General 關雲長 who had a red face and could keep the ghosts away.*

Because the compound was used as a prison during the Japanese occupation of the Second World War, it had many stories about ghosts in the office on the second floor. My brother used to tell us to scare us little kids.

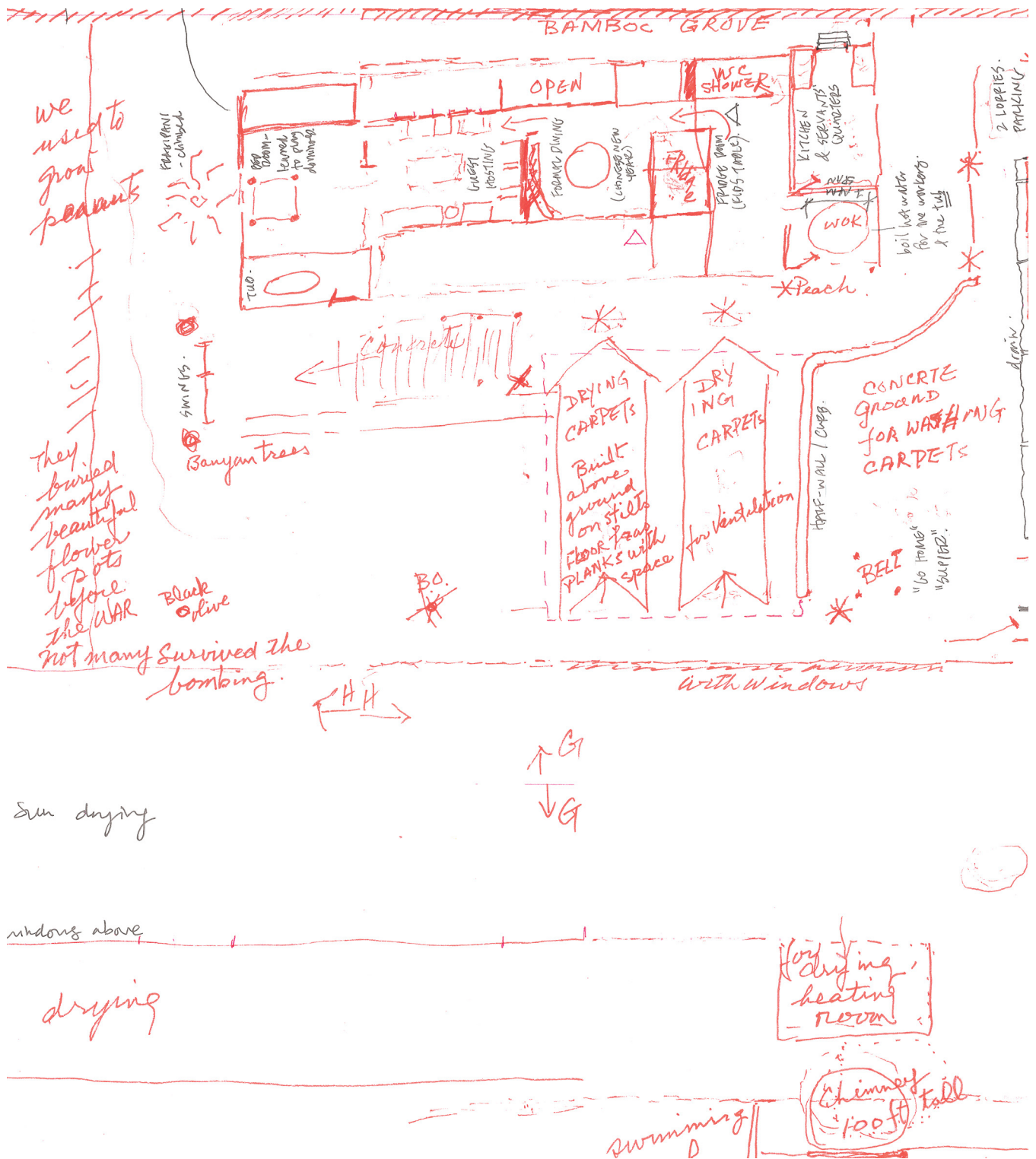


Fig. A.8 Grandma's house, image by Aunty A and author.

This is Aunty A's grandmother's house, where she learned to play mah jong. The family buried valuable flower pots here before the Japanese invaded during WWII.

Fig. A.11 1944 Japanese occupation period 年日佔時期, unknown newspaper company, 1944, 歷史時空 Tsewaii Society & Culture Website.

This newspaper clipping states that the owner of the Kowloon laundry compound passed away on June 5, 1944 during the Japanese occupation. This would be Auntie A's grandfather:

“When the compound was taken over by the Japanese army, there was no work. They came in with rifles and my grandfather died, he was so shocked. My mother went with the three kids back to the village in Guangdong. My dad took off to go fight, my big brother too. Dad was an interpreter for the American army.”

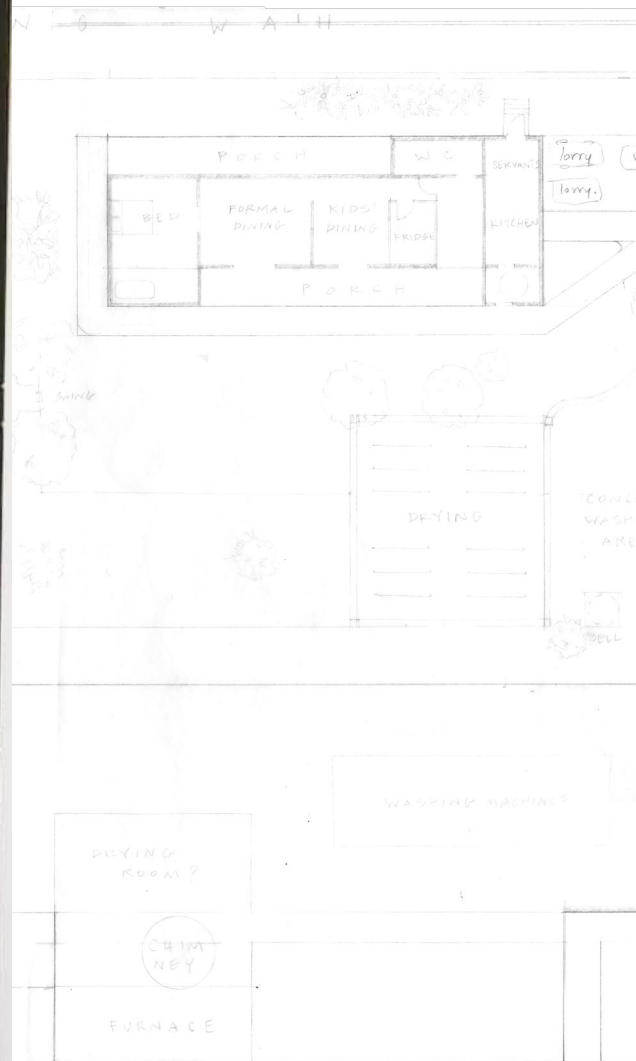
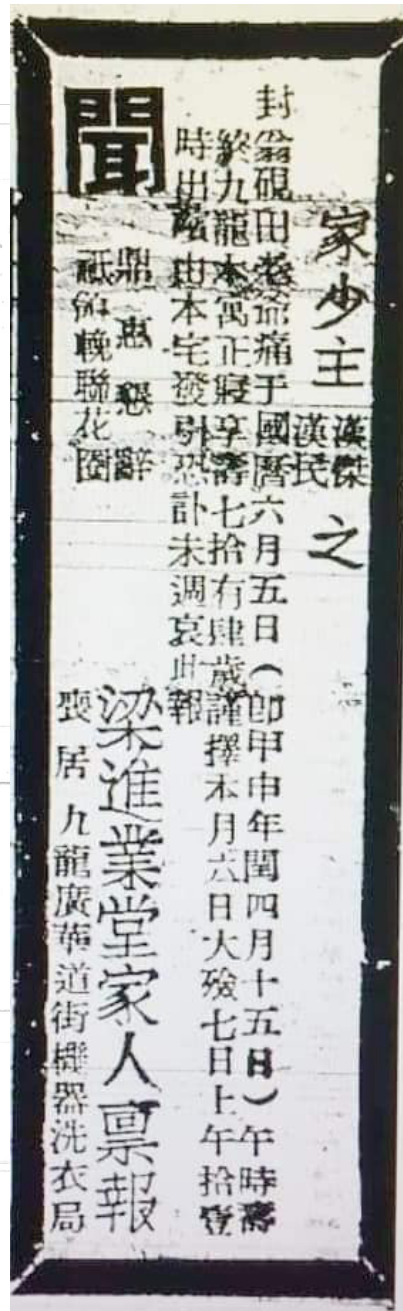
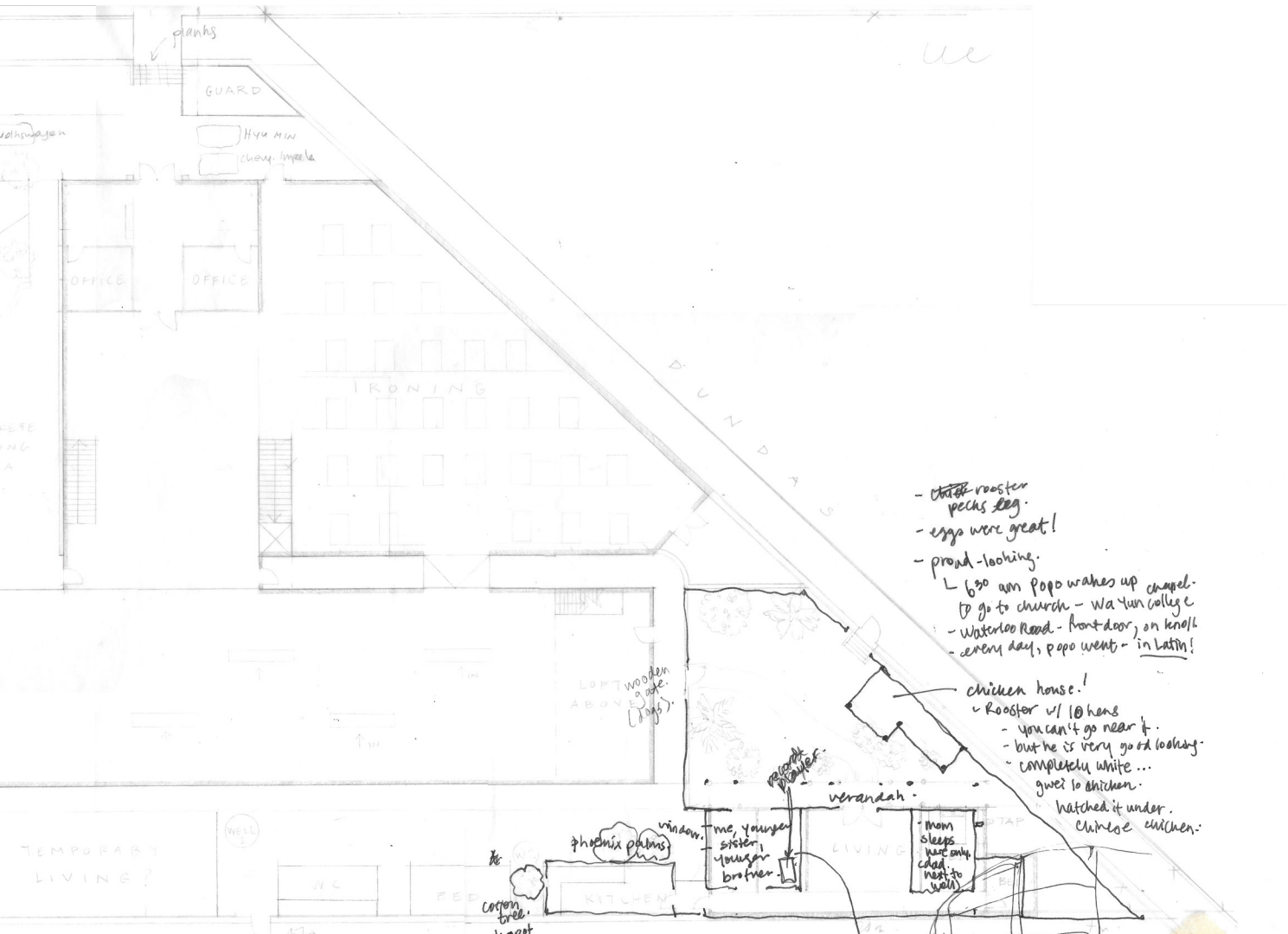


Fig. A.12 The Kowloon Steam Laundry Compound, image by author.

In an attempt to draft this building to scale, I found that the plans Auntie A drew were almost exactly at 1:500.



- ~~chick~~ rooster
 pecks leg.
 - eggs were great!
 - proud-looking.
 - 6:30 am Pogo wakes up chapel.
 - to go to church - Wa Yuen college
 - Waterloo Road - front door, on knoll
 - every day, Pogo went - in Latin!

chicken house!
 - Rooster w/ 10 hens
 - you can't go near it.
 - but he is very good looking.
 - completely white...
 - gwei to chicken.
 - hatched it under.
 Chinese chicken.

phoenix plants
 window.
 me, younger
 sister,
 younger
 brother.
 cocoon
 tree.
 kapok
 (red
 flower).
 wooden
 wool.

1920s?
 1902 established.
 * this corner used to be a bungalow for fire workers

no partitions
 11W: ghost stories on radio.
 spooky
 11am a/c.
 Sunday:
 children's
 hour. puzzles
 11am dimsum!

restaurant for
 dimsum.
 don't eat che sin
 bao! it will fill
 you up.

Where did you live in the compound?

We lived in the corner over there. It used to be a bungalow for the workers. I spent a lot of time in the garden. My mom used to tell me, go to the garden and yell as loud as you can, and you'll feel better.

Did you?

No, I never did that. I spent most of the time by myself. I was the most naughty. I climbed the trees. I would rollerskate and ride my bicycle through the compound. I was bored a lot there.

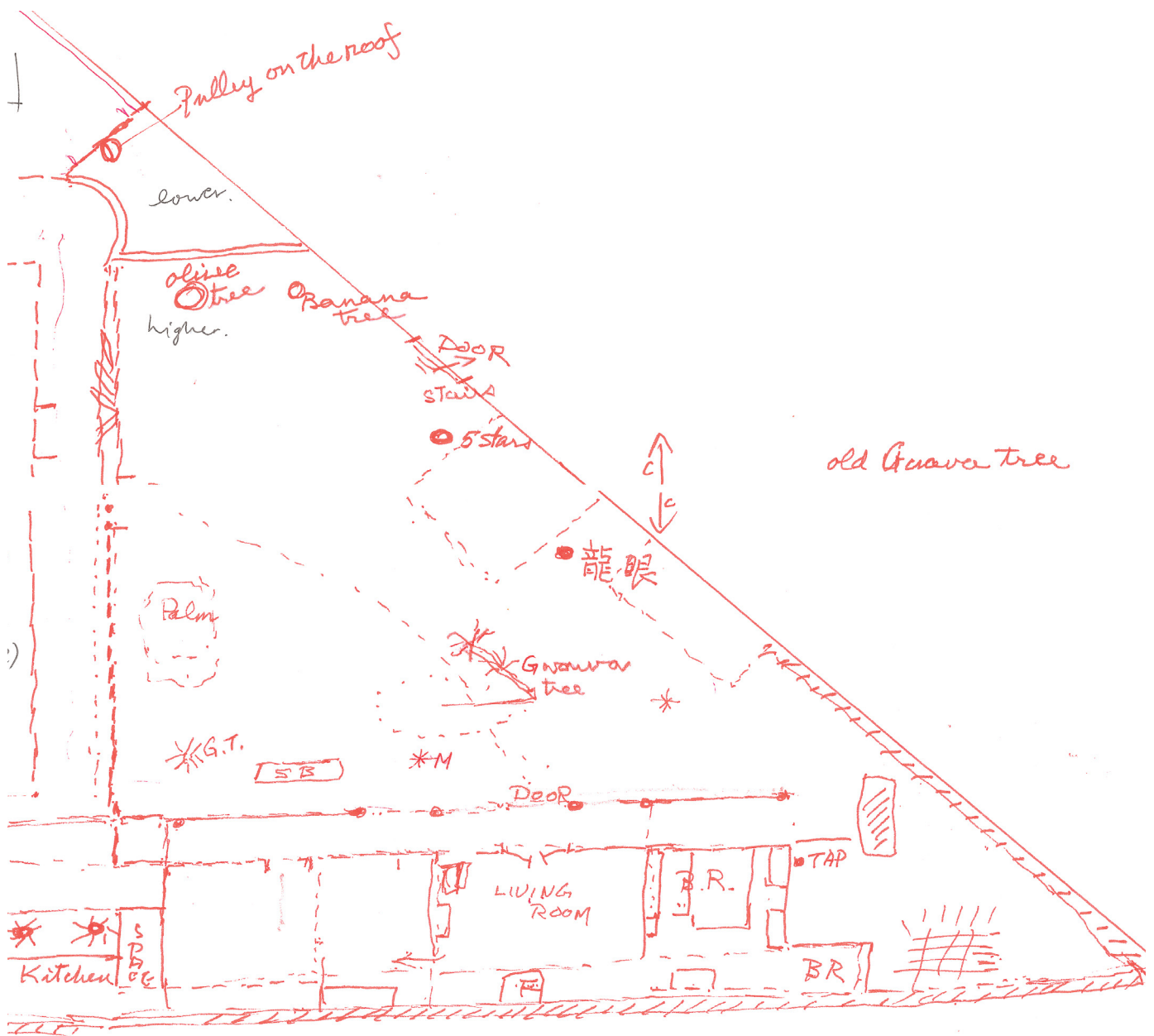


Fig. A.13 Home in Kowloon, image by Aunty A.

This building used to house workers in the compound, and was converted into living quarters for Aunty A's family.

You would love it, if only we still had it. In the garden, my grandfather planted so many fruit trees for the grandchildren.

What kind of fruit trees?

Oh, we had everything. Peach, guava, starfruit, black olive—the green olive trees too, are especially sweet and refreshing—banana, yun sum, pei pow gua, grapes, and ling goh. Back then we can grow anything, because of the wet climate in Hong Kong.

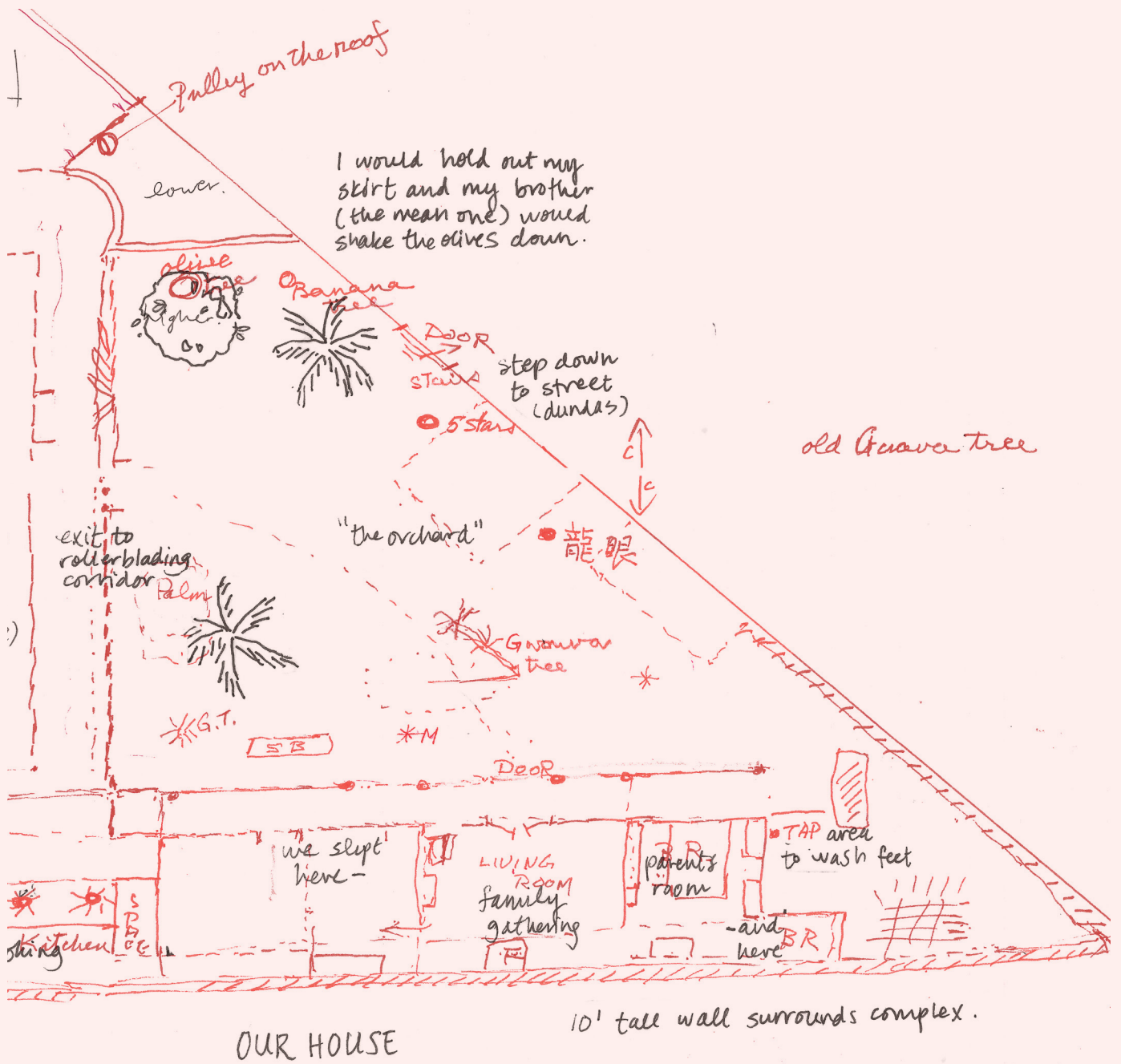


Fig. A.14 Home in Kowloon, image by Auntie A and author.

The orchard grew many kinds of fruit trees that Auntie A used to get in trouble for climbing.

On collective databases

1 *Gwulo* translates roughly to “old.”

2 “About,” *Gwulo: Old Hong Kong*, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://gwulo.com/about-gwulo>.

3 “Street Scenes of Kwong Wa Street, Pitt Street and Waterloo Road in the 1950s,” *Hong Kong Memory 香港記憶*, accessed January 30, 2022, https://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_70/records/index.html#p56992.

4 “About Hong Kong Memory,” *Hong Kong Memory 香港記憶*, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.hkmemory.hk/Communities/ats/ah/index.html>.

After hanging up the phone, I find myself hunting through internet archives late into the night. I’d been nervous to make the call earlier, worried about coming off as ignorant, or worse, nosey—but now, my brain is buzzing with excitement. How could gardens exist in the heart of Kowloon? Such a rural-seeming description of an area that is now full of skyscrapers tickles my sense of reality.

Internet searches for “Kowloon Steam laundry history” return historic photos of Kowloon on a website called *Gwulo: Old Hong Kong*.¹ It’s a collection of old photos of Hong Kong, started around 2009 by a Welsh expatriate named David Bellis. The site allows the public to upload photos, stories, or comment their best guesses of what buildings are portrayed, and has received a Citation from the American Institute of Architects’ Hong Kong Chapter in 2013 for its work in valuing the history of Hong Kong’s built fabric.² I find many other similar projects online:

On the Hong Kong Memory website, I find a description of the laundry compound by Wong Wan Pui:

“The site of Yan On Building was the Steam Laundry Company Limited. It was a single storey building with a gateway. In business hours, the gate was opened and the passers-by could see workers washing bedcovers and other laundry inside.”³

Hong Kong Memory is a database of digitized materials on Hong Kong’s cultural history and heritage, commissioned in 2006 by the Hong Kong Jockey Club as a response to UNESCO’s Memory of the World Programme to digitize archives and prevent against “collective amnesia.”⁴ Hong Kong-based researchers, participating experts, community interviewees, and Hong Kong institutions contributed to this repository of archival photos, documents, videos, and posters.

On the Hong Kong Historic Maps website, I find maps noting the laundry compound’s name. Tymon, an engineer working in Hong Kong, uses the website to host old maps of Hong Kong between 1810-1995. The site features a map viewing function, information about each map, and links to historic maps of Hong Kong in government databases and private collections.

On the Industrial History of Hong Kong Group website, I find historic flyers and information about historic steam laundry businesses. This informal group of people with an interest in Hong

Kong's manufacturing history was formed in 2012. They collect information anywhere from the 3rd century BCE to the present-day in a blog-style website open to public uploads and commentary.

These projects overlap with my own research, revealing aspects of history embedded in collective memory that do not appear in written historic records. I suspect that my lack of knowledge of the Chinese language limits my ability to conduct research on the city's history, but even in English, the existence of these memory archives reinforce the inherent value in conducting this project. From the broad lens of national history, Aunty A's childhood is invisible—you can't see her climb the olive trees in the garden, and you wouldn't hear the ghost stories her brother tells about the people killed there when the Japanese soldiers occupied the compound during WWII. Although the compound itself has long since been redeveloped into condos, its tall smokestack was a landmark within these scattered repositories of collective memory, appearing in photos of the nearby Kwong Wah Hospital and the East Orient Tobacco Factory. I wonder who else's pasts these memories overlap.

Home upholds collective memory as one piece of a larger puzzle.

2022

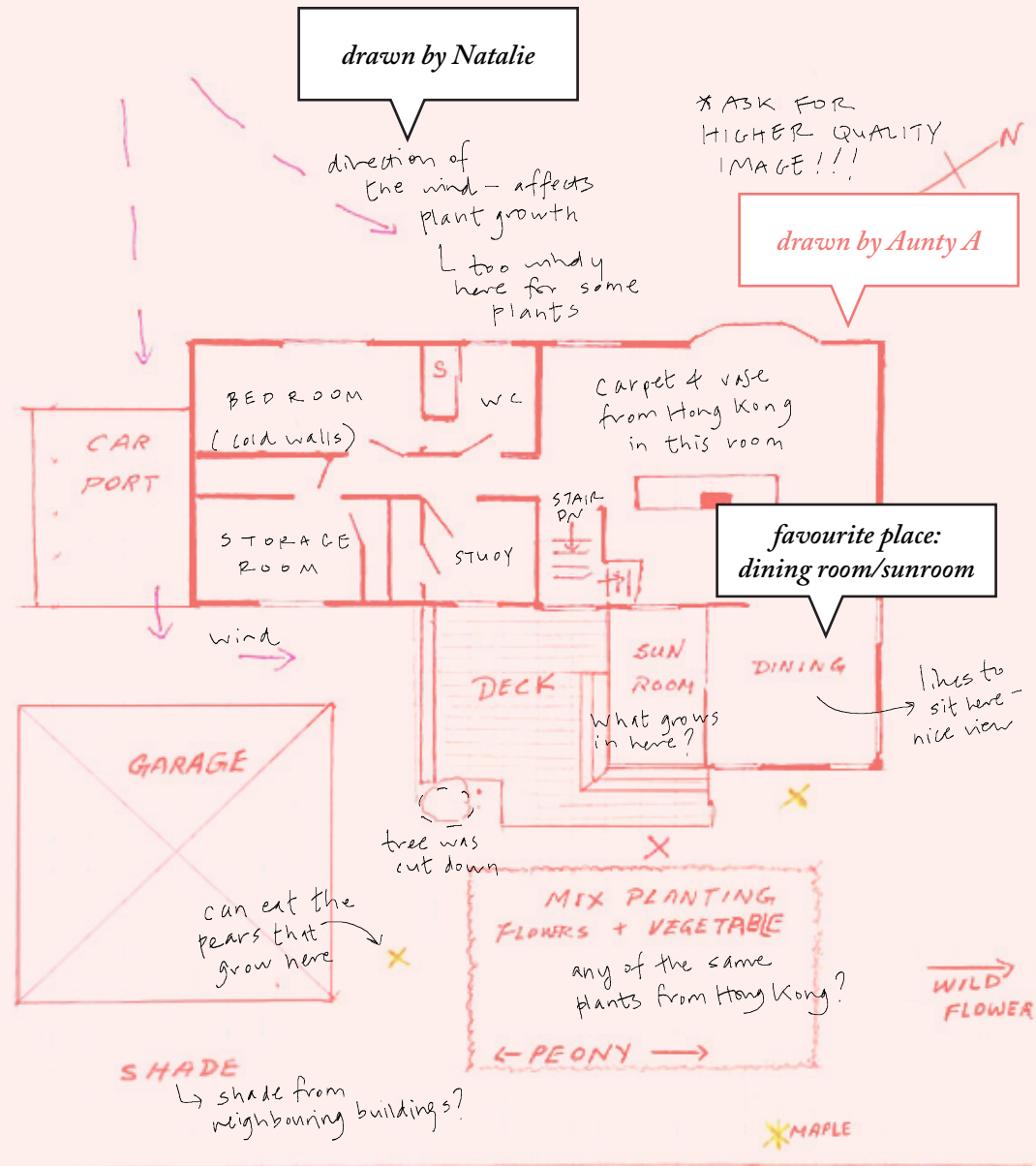
Oakville

Ontario, Canada

What does the garden look like in your current house?

In the garden today, I have flowers mixed with veggies. You know, coneflowers in the corner, I have marigolds and peonies too. And green onions, because I like to eat them. Thyme and parsley, to keep the bugs and the rabbits away. Each one has a purpose. If you grow carrots, they will be gone. The rabbits and groundhogs will eat them.

You have to look where the wind and sun are coming from to plant your garden. If you have too much wind coming through there, nothing will grow.



LEGEND

- WIND
- X MAGNOLIA
- X PEAR TREE
- STOVE
- S SHOWER

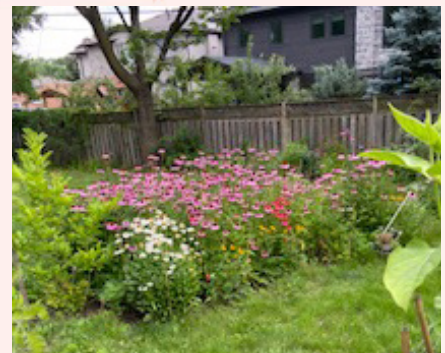


Fig. A.15 Home in Oakville, image by Aunty A and author.

Fig. A.16 Backyard, image by Aunty A.

Aunty A includes the plants and the direction of the wind on her drawing.

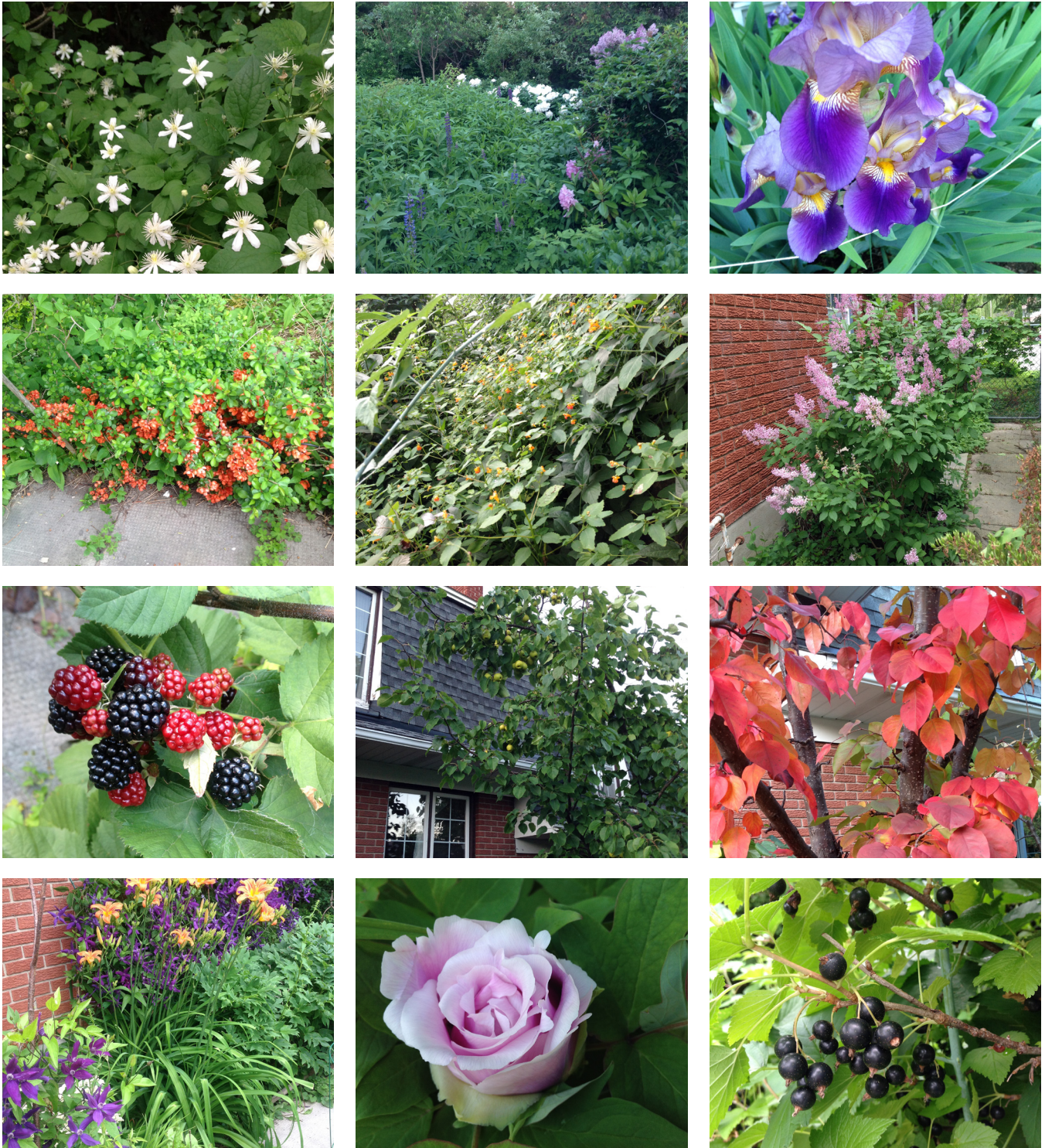


Fig. A.17 *Ottawa garden*, photos by Aunty A.

Photos of her garden in Ottawa, where Aunty A lived for over 20 years before moving to Oakville to be closer to family.



Are there any objects you brought with you from Hong Kong?

I have the travel trunk I brought with me to the convent in London, and later to Canada. I can fit everything I need in here.

You should see my mum's trunk. It was part of the furniture in her dowry when she married my dad—it folds open like a wardrobe. I wanted to keep the other furniture, but they donated it to the temple on Lantau Island. You can see it if you go there.



Fig. A.18 *Travel trunk*, image by Aunty A.



Fig. A.19 *Grandmother's travel trunk*, image by Aunty A.

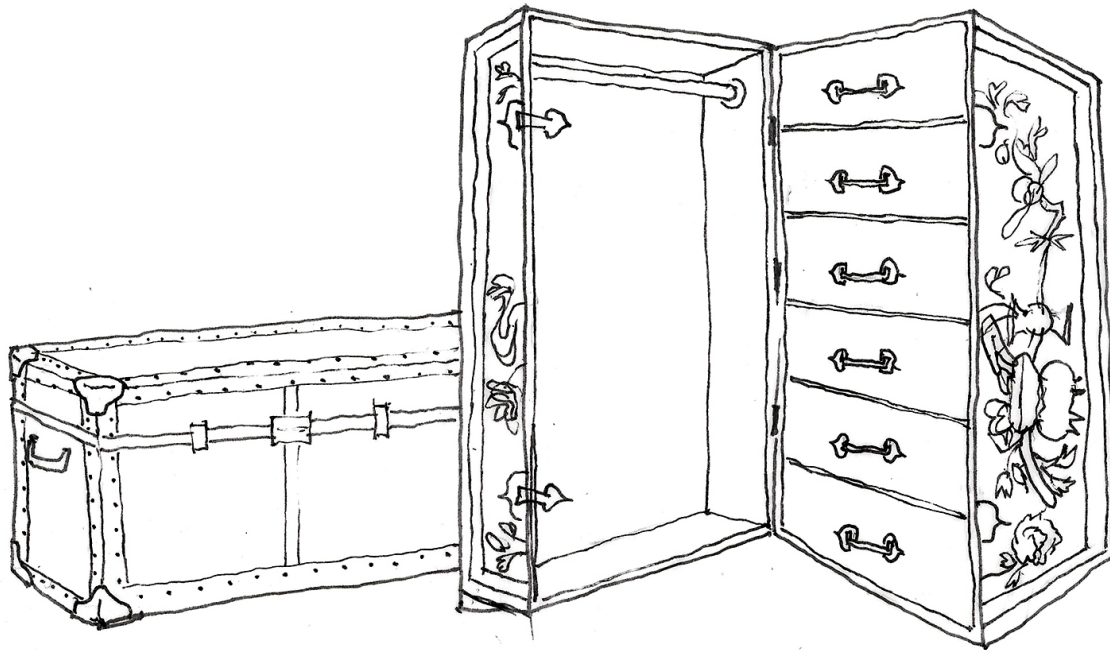


Fig. A.20 *Sketch of travel trunks*, image by author.

This carpet was left behind at the laundry compound by the Happy Valley Racecourse—we used to wash carpets for them. My mom brought it with her when she came to Canada, and she asked if she could store it at my house. I said, “Okay.” But she never took it back!



Fig. A.21 *Carpet*, image by Aunty A.

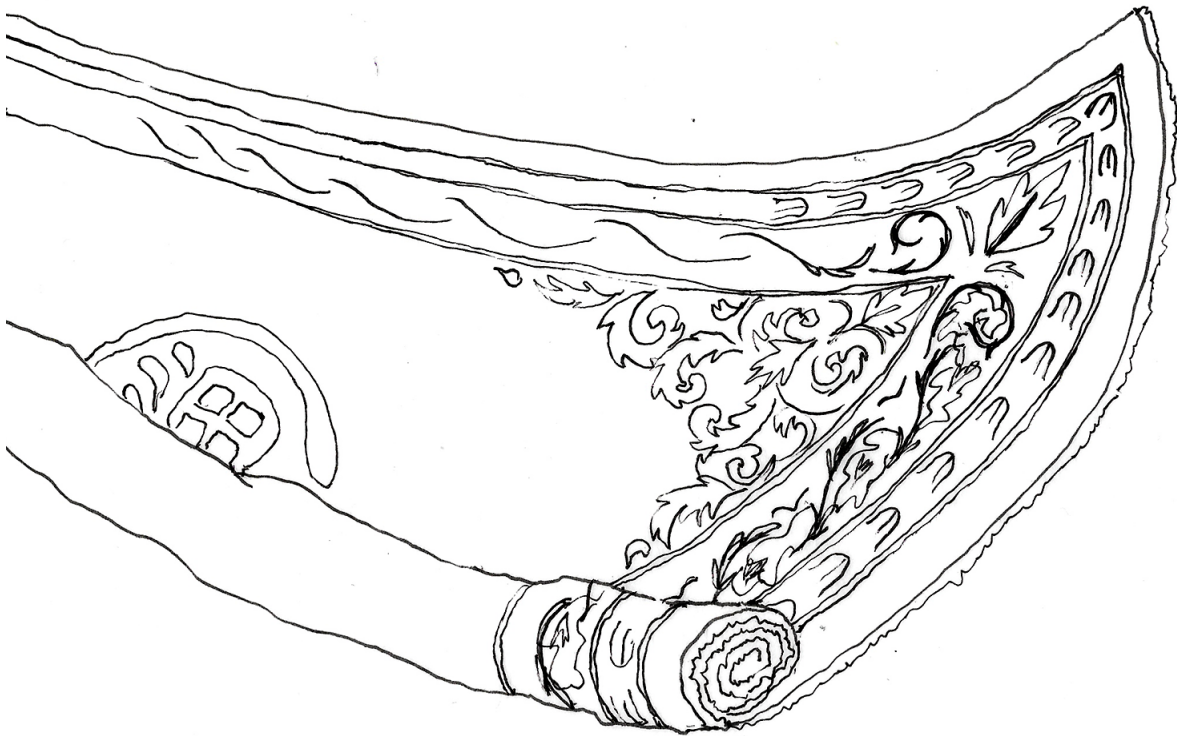


Fig. A.22 *Sketch of carpet*, image by author.

Do you want to know the story behind this vase?

Yes, please tell me!

After the Japanese left Hong Kong, the American army dropped us off in Guangzhou. I was just a baby then. My dad was supposed to buy us a ticket back, but he started following a beautiful lady and the ticket office closed. We got tickets for a later boat, but the one we were supposed to be on crashed into a mine in the harbour, many people died. So, my dad would always leave an orchid in this vase for Kwun Yum, the goddess he followed that day.

I think he may have just been following a beautiful lady that day. But even so, it's very special to me.



Fig. A.23 *Vase*, image by Aunty A.

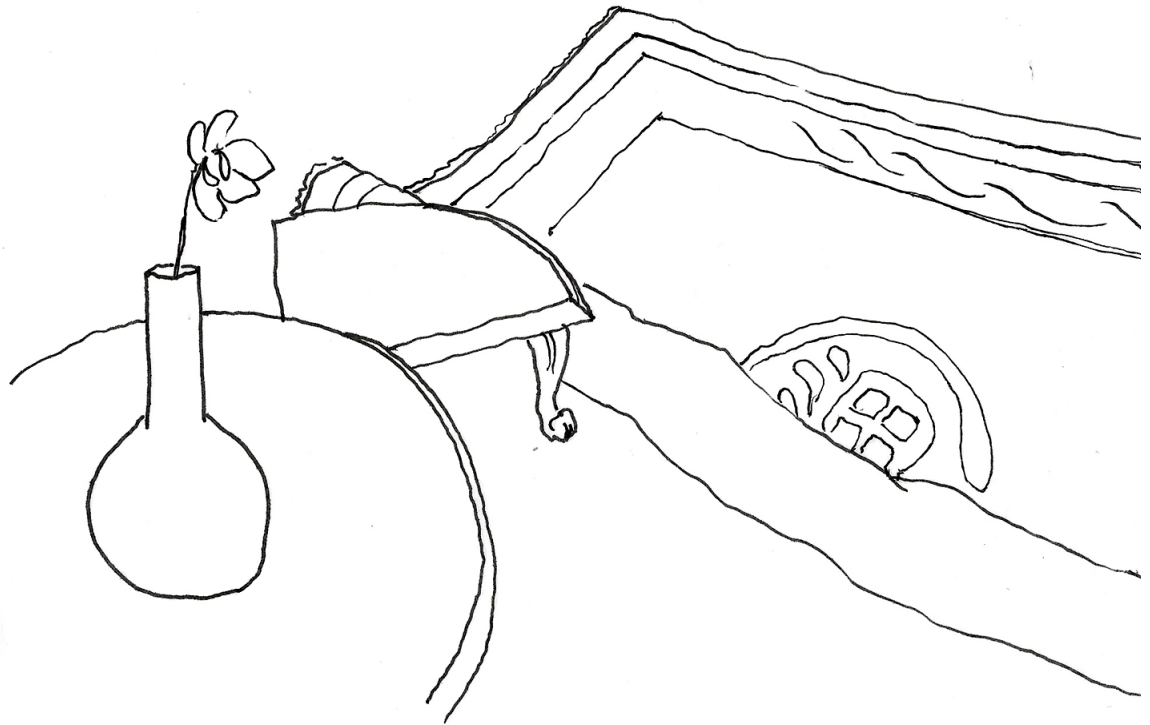


Fig. A.24 *Sketch of vase*, image by author.

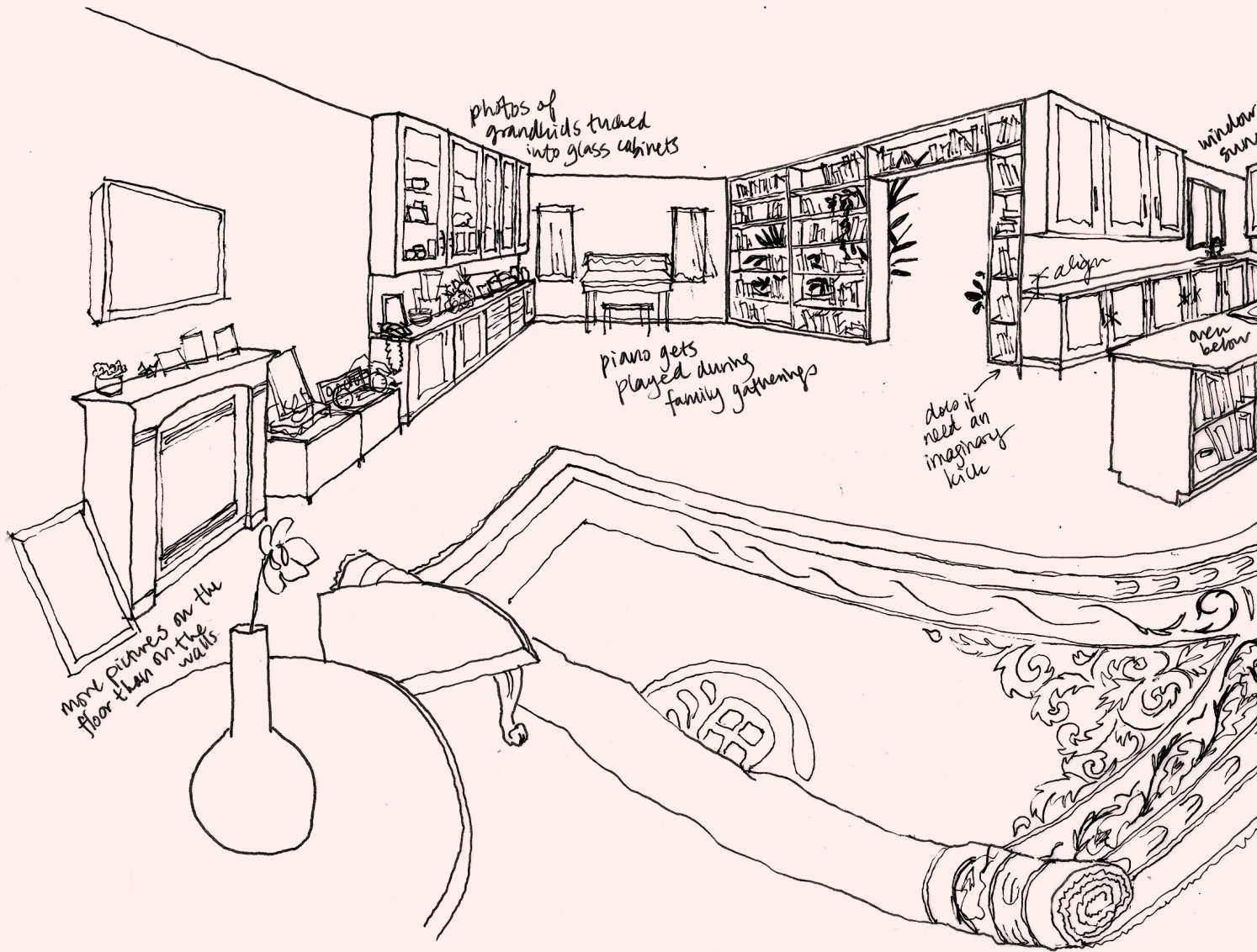
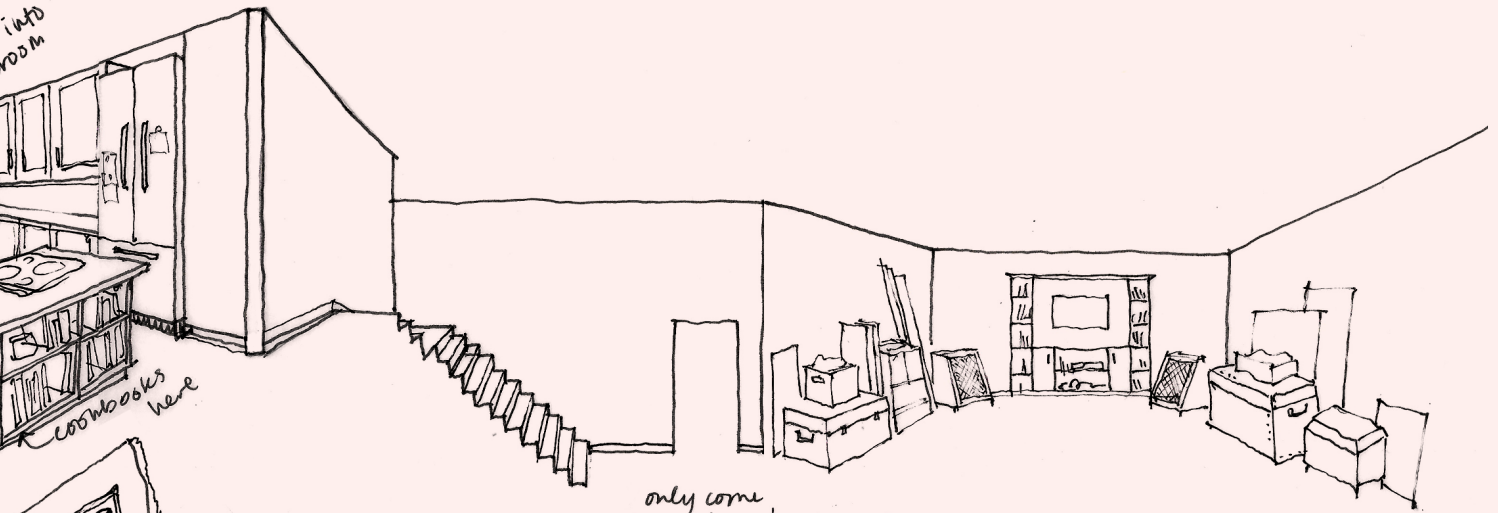
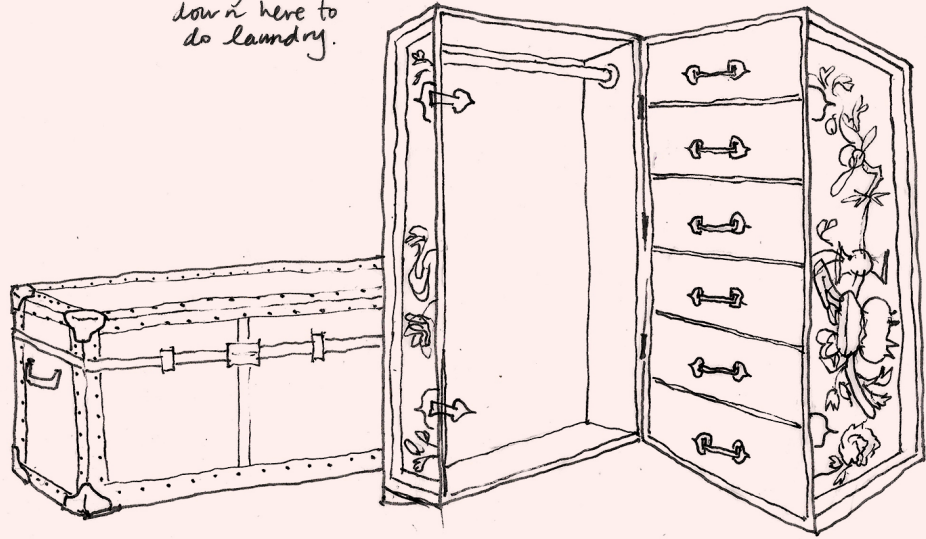


Fig. A.25 *Perspective drawing*, image by author.

Each of these objects are tied to Aunty A's life in Hong Kong.



only come
down here to
do laundry.



On objects as memory

5 Divya Tolia-Kelly, "Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-Memory through Artefacts in the British Asian Home," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29, no. 3 (2004): 317.

I'm encouraged by Aunty A's enthusiasm and the connections she makes between each of the artifacts within her house. Documenting them feels like an archival practice, recording each object within the house and its significance as an everyday object that traveled through time and space. They seem to serve as physical reminders of the stories she tells, anchoring her own memory of specific events within her current home.

In her research on artifacts in the British-South Asian home, Divya Tolia-Kelly explores how migrants revisit place-based memory and forge identities in another country. She states that possessions "are connective markers to geographical nodes of identification. Through their prismatic nature, 'other' lives, lands, and homes are made part of this one."⁵ Aunty A keeps her travel trunk in the basement where she only really goes to do laundry. I'm not surprised that the travel trunk ended up there, since it doesn't see much use these days. The vase and carpet are similarly innocuous objects occupying prominent spots in her living room.

At first glance I wouldn't grasp the meaning Aunty A ascribes to them; however, although they may not hold significance within the collective memory of Hong Kong Canadians as cultural artifacts, they are connected to her unique history of movement.

Home is embedded within transnational objects.

What would you change about where you live now?

I want to turn all the walls into bookshelves.

Oh, okay! So you'll be able to see through them all?

Yes, it's nice to be surrounded by books and knowledge. I also want to have hotpot together with the family in the sunroom, we don't fit everyone there right now.

Here is a quick sketch—this image is of the sunroom, looking towards the backyard. I made the sunroom bigger and added in a window, and a big table for hotpot! And I added bookshelves on the left. What do you think?



Fig. A.26 Sunroom, image by Aunty A.



Fig. A.27 *Pointsettia* in sunroom, image by Aunty A.



Fig. A.28 *Chrysanthemum* in sunroom, image by Aunty A.

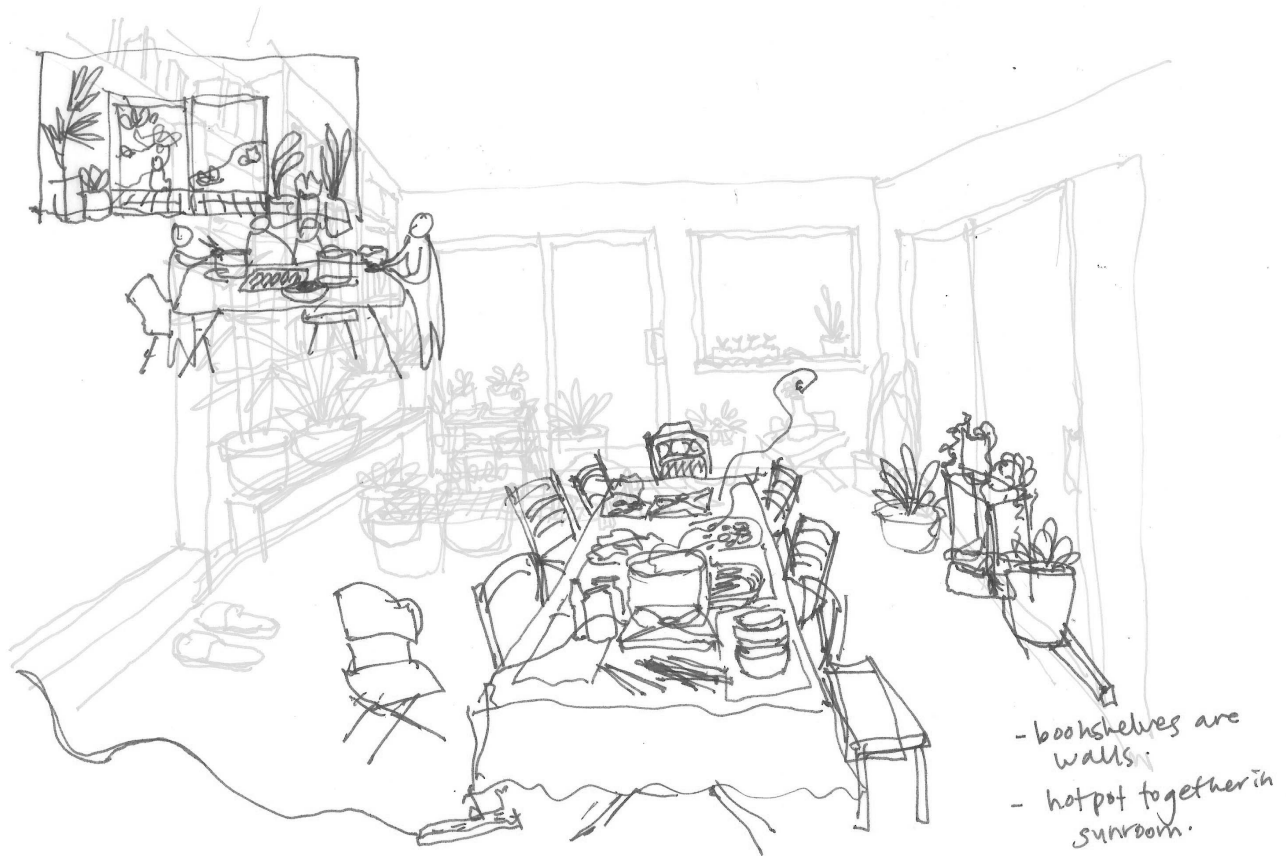


Fig. A.29 *Process work*, image by author.

*Chinese hotpot meals involve cooking an assortment of meat, vegetables, noodles, and more in a boiling pot of soup at your table. The more you eat, the richer flavour of the soup becomes.

You practically saw my plan for the multi-functional sunroom. If you use the bookshelves as the wall between the sunroom and the dining room! Then, just take out that existing wall, bring up the floor of the sunroom to be levelled to the dining room! We will have a room of 20 feet by 13 feet. The east wall will be bookshelves. The middle will be a big oval table to sit 16 people, two induction hot plates for the hot pots.* People with long arms will sit in the middle.

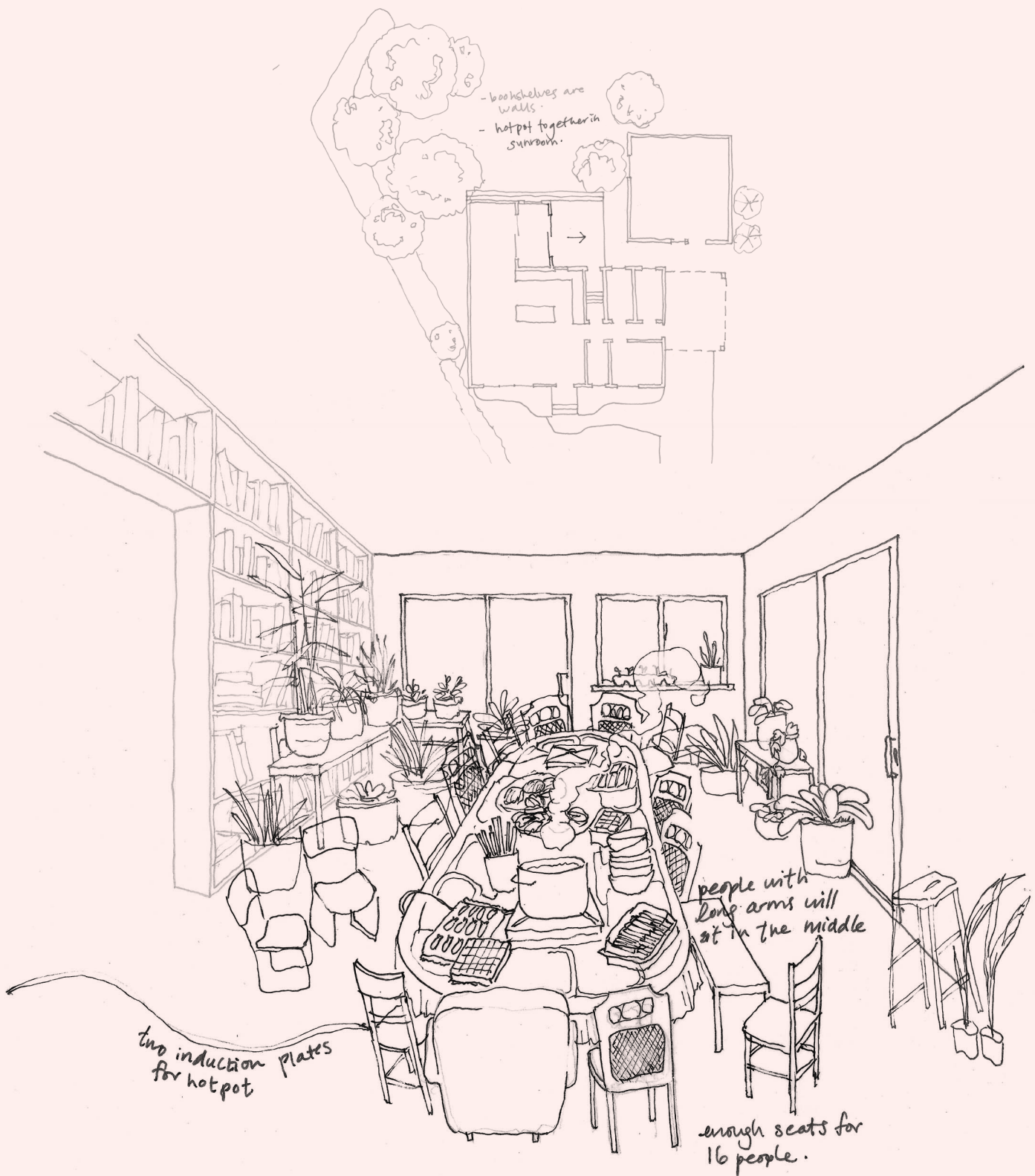


Fig. A.30 Sunroom hotpot proposal, image by author.

When not in use, it will be my sunroom, my whatever room... my dream place to be taking a nap and oh! Such a happy possibility you have given me.

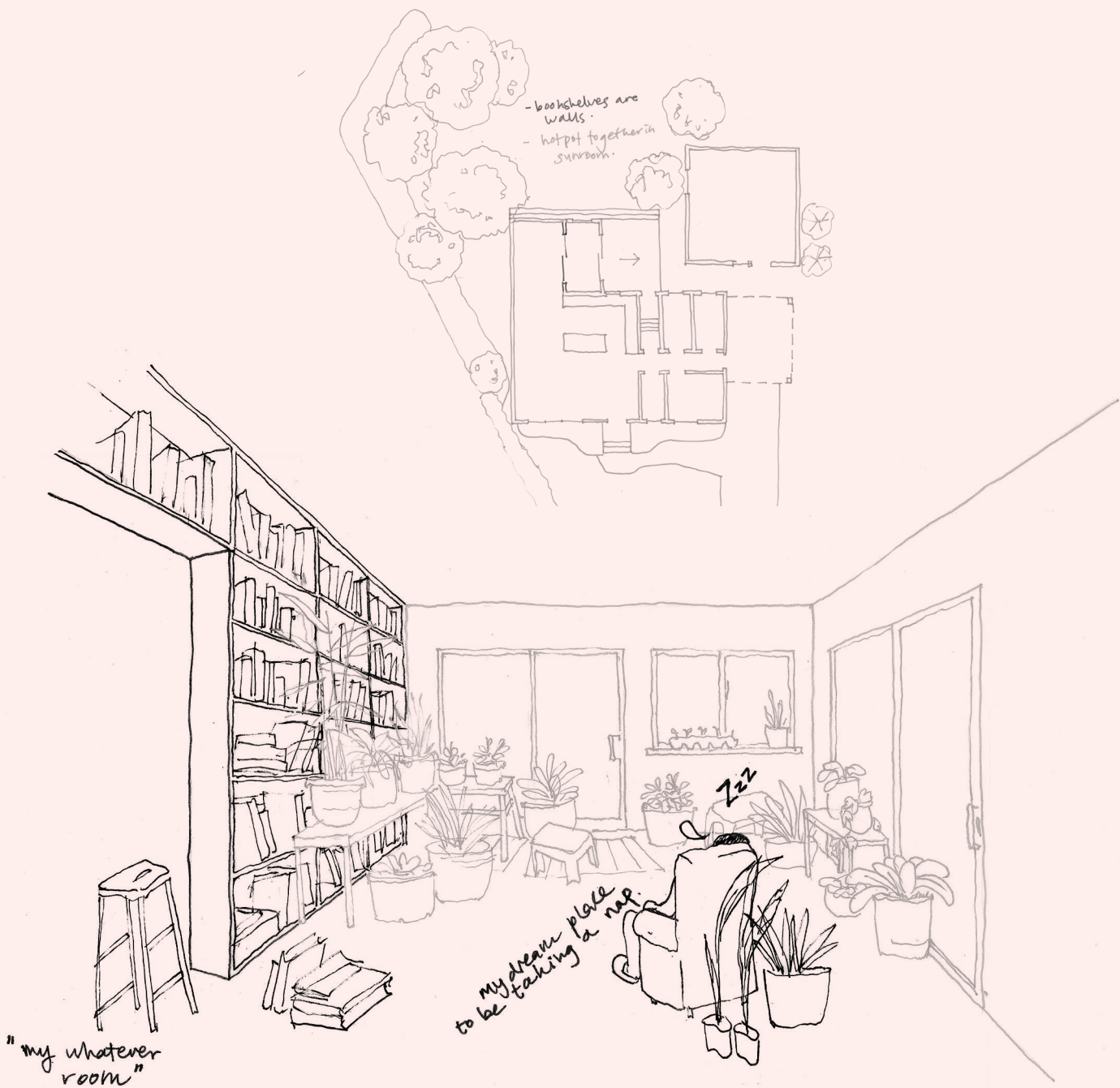


Fig. A.31 Sunroom bookshelf proposal, image by author.

On familiarity

6 Mirjana Lozanovska, *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration*, Architext Series (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 4.

7 Lozanovska, 231.

Although Aunty A doesn't speak with the same sense of nostalgia about her current home, the theme of the garden runs strongly throughout our conversations and permeates the way she lives now. This is clear through her descriptions of the plants she's growing, and the care she took to draw her garden in the plans for both her childhood and current homes. The changes she suggests for her current house resonate strongly with fond memories of her home in Hong Kong: she wants to have hotpot together with her family in the sunroom, surrounded by plants. I imagine it would be like having hotpot in a jungle. The continuity of the garden seems less of a coincidence, and more so a way of making home in another place by creating a sense of familiarity.

Based on the plans Aunty A drew of her garden, it wasn't apparent to me that it had anything to do with ethnicity. She labeled the plans in English and the flora she indicated were all commonly found in Canada. However, the garden's significance recalls Lozanovska's concept of "ethno-architecture" as the made expression of migrants.⁶ Lozanovska describes how migrants construct physical aspects of home and are often "compelled to articulate and manifest connection to two or several sites" through a "dominating migrant agency and capacity to build."⁷ Growing a garden seems to be an ordinary act of change that manifests a familiar connection to the past. Although the plants that will flourish in Canada are not the same as those in Hong Kong, they still shelter and populate Aunty A's home in a similar way.

Home reflects what is familiar.

To summarize

When researching the laundry compound as a landmark in the area, I explored the use of *collective databases* as important public records of movement and place.

Each of the *objects of significance* that connect Aunty A back to her home in Hong Kong held special meaning as anchors for memory and stories.

The garden in her childhood home carried through as a *familiar* space in Aunty A's current backyard and sunroom. The plans she imagined for the sunroom connect her back to a sense of being surrounded by greenery and family that is strongly reminiscent of her home in Hong Kong.

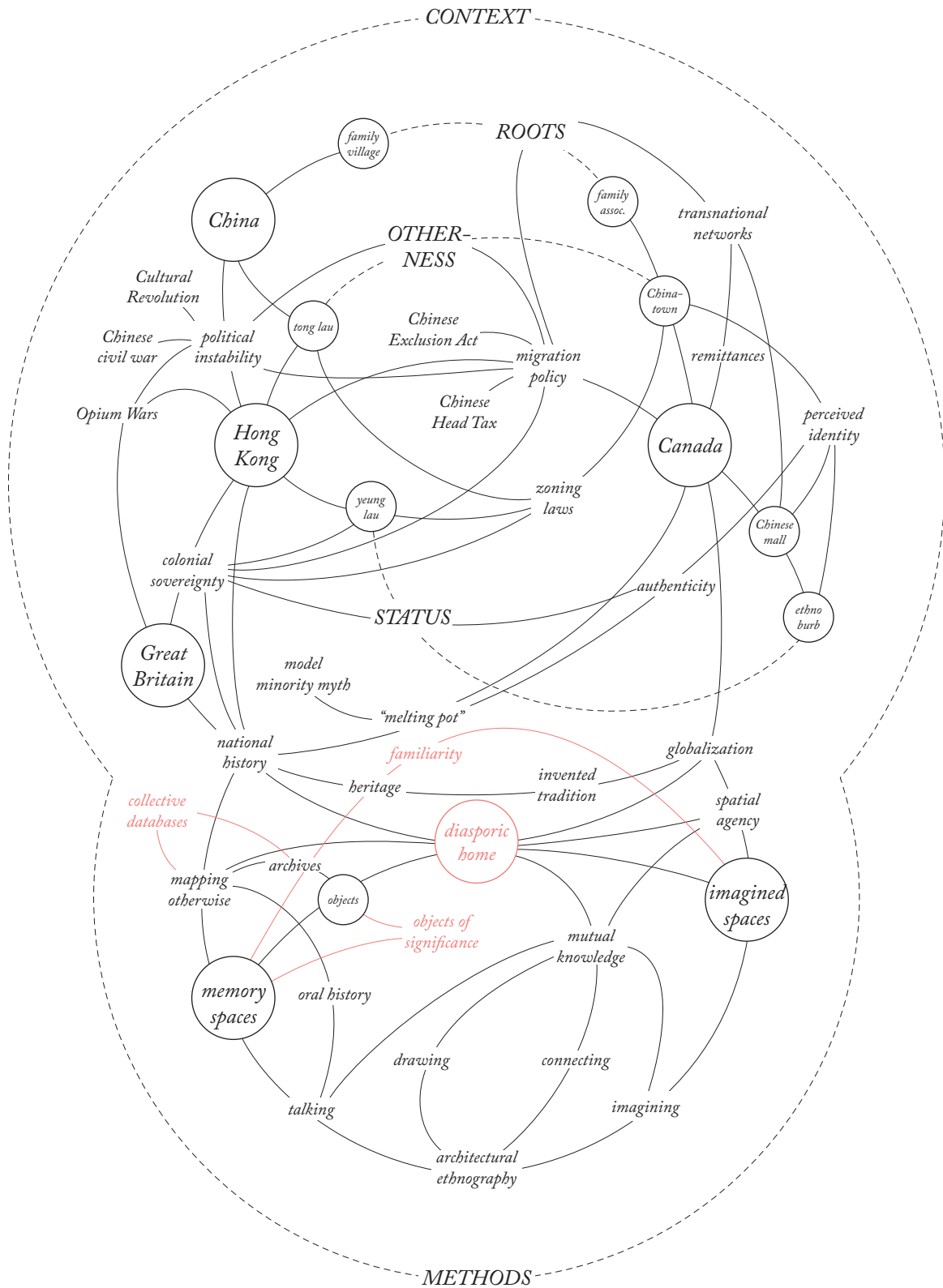


Fig. A.32 Thesis diagram, by author.

Highlighting the specific themes that this conversation explores.

1967

In Hong Kong

*211 Jaffe Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kong*

*First 2 floors of a 6-storey post-war
tong lau*

*11 people (8 family members, 2
servants, 1 office helper)*

The courtyard was a significant memory of Aunty B's home in Hong Kong, which she referred to as an "empty space." However, at any given time it contained: tools and equipment for her father's construction company; the family dog to prevent him from biting visitors; caged pet birds that accompanied the family to dim sum restaurants; chickens and their eggs; and the Lunar New Year celebrations with the entire extended family.

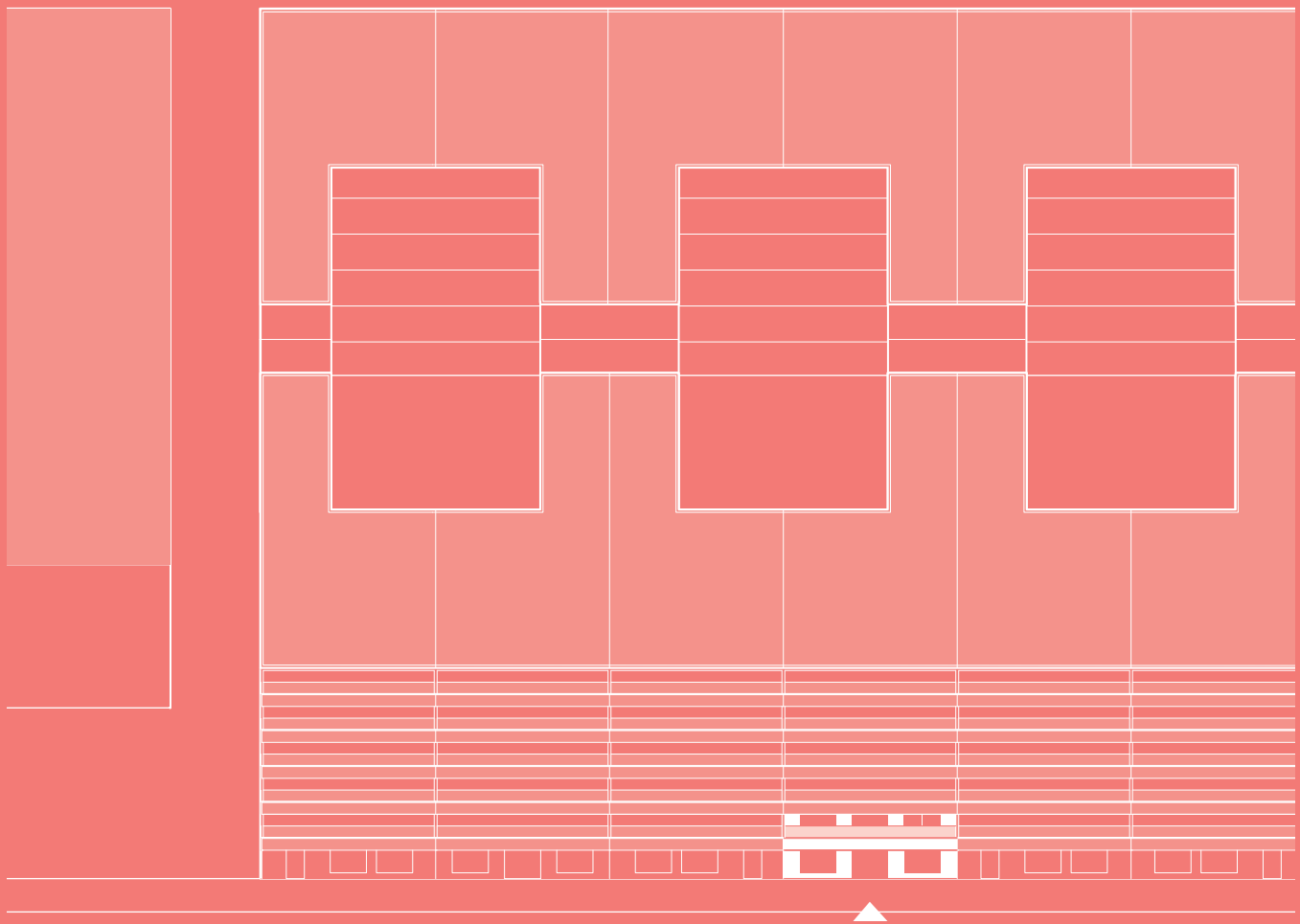


Fig. B.1 *Aunty B's home in Wan Chai*, image by author.

In her current home, Aunty B enjoys spending time in the kitchen and dining room. Her bedroom has extra space that she currently uses for sewing. Every once in a while, her children come over with items in need of repair to use her sewing machine. We adjusted the bedroom layout to better accommodate the sewing area—an empty space with the potential for another purpose.

*Mississauga
Ontario, Canada*

Two-storey detached house

2 people

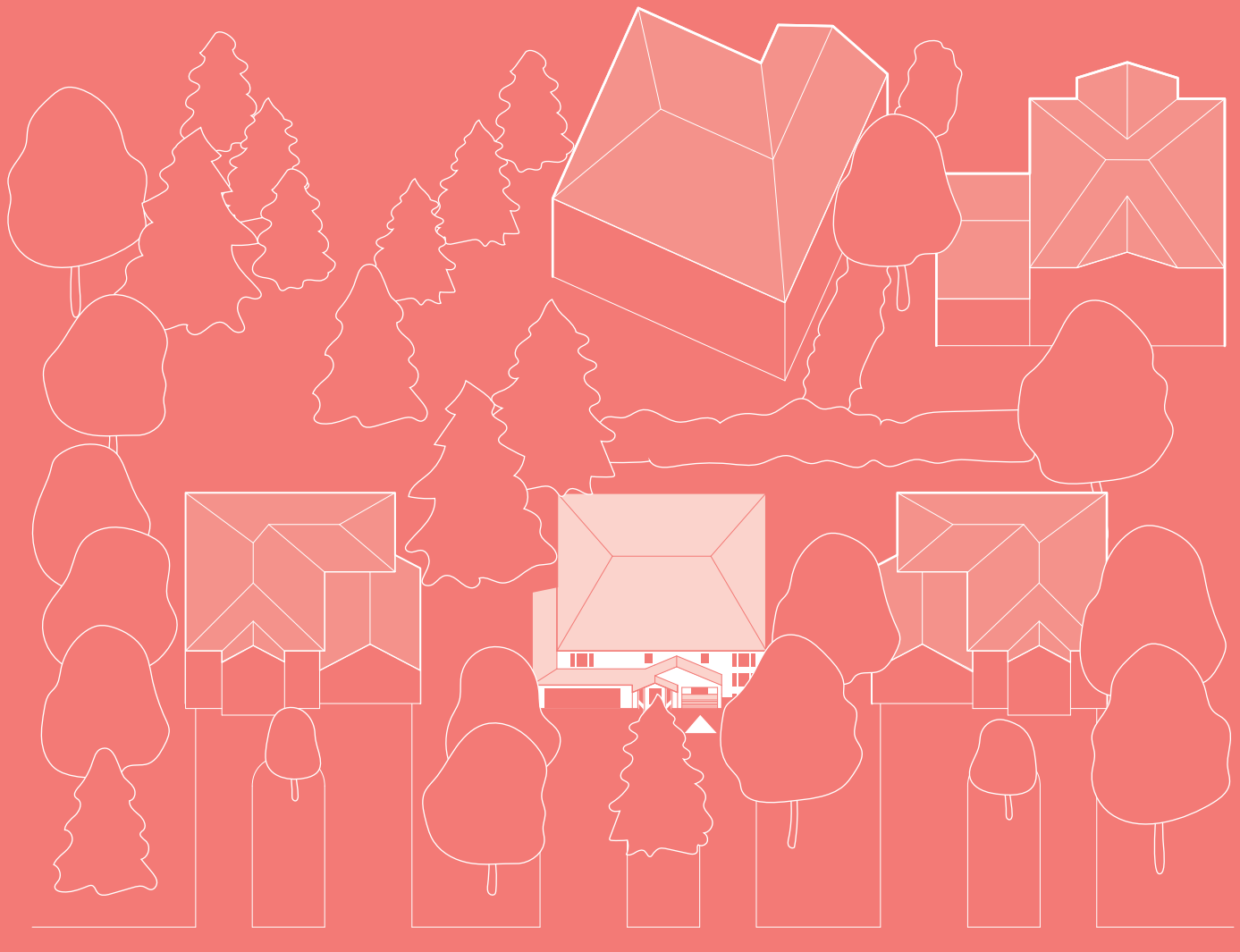


Fig. B.2 *Aunty B's home in Mississauga*, image by author.

1967

211 Jaffe Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Natalie:

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Aunty B:

It was quite well built since it survived a lot of abuse from typhoon seasons.



Fig. B.3 *Jaffe Road in Wan Chai* 灣仔謝斐道, c.1960, Hong Kong Information Services Department, Hong Kong Public Libraries, PHAR318.1.

Aunty B's apartment was on this street. It was a 4-storey pre-war tong lau typology which has since been demolished and replaced with condos.

Fig. B.4 *Wan Chai* 灣仔, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, P2008.0759.





Fig. B.5 Hong Kong: Victoria, Great Britain War Office, 1945, National Library of Australia, MAP G7944.H6 1945.

Can you tell me about the house where you grew up?

Okay. So I was born after the war, right? This is a very typical building when they started to develop Hong Kong. Do you have a pen? All right, so draw a rectangle. And then divide it into half, more or less half. So basically, it's a square, and then when we come in the front that's my dad's office. Right, so it's a sitting area. The back is an empty space. The back half, maybe $\frac{1}{3}$ of it is inside, but $\frac{2}{3}$ of it is open space.

So have you got it? Have you
got the image?

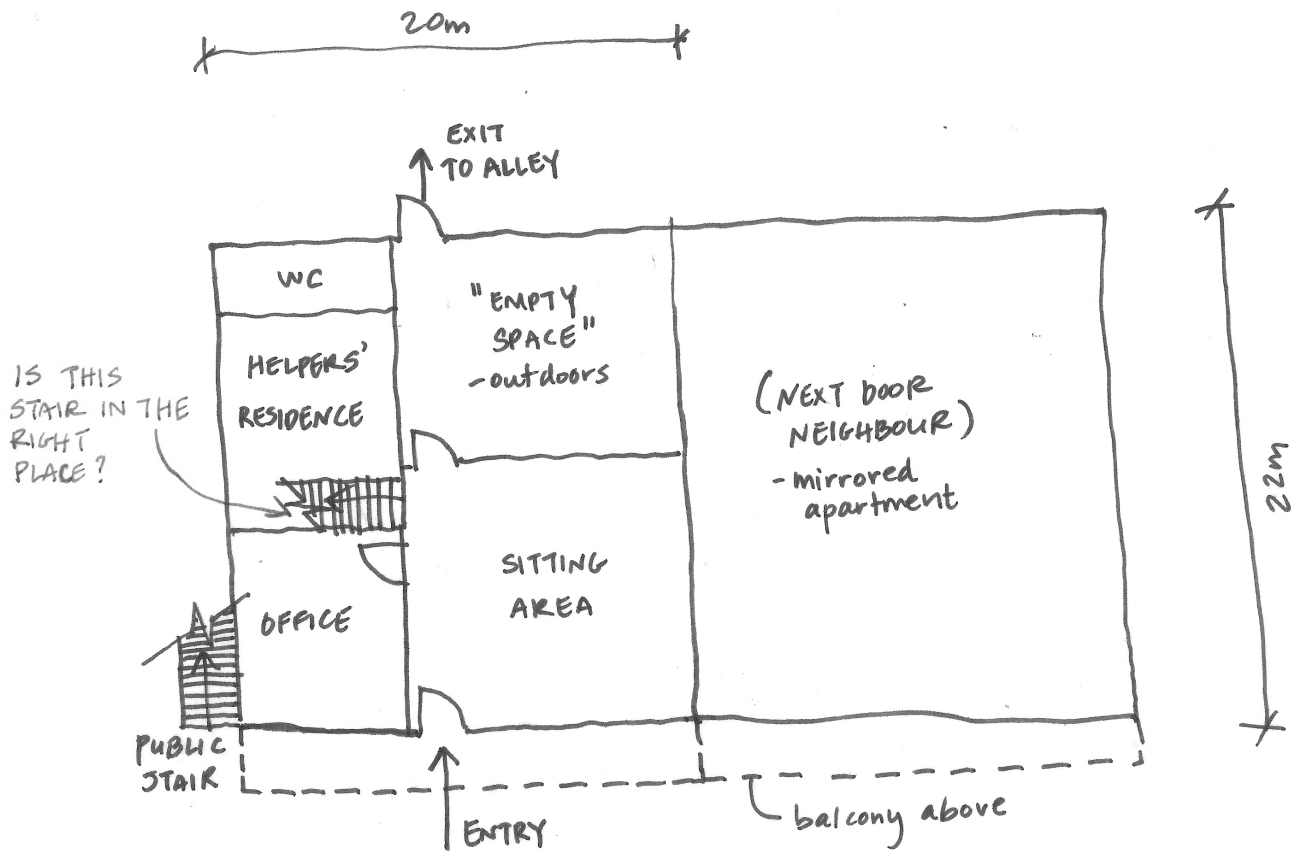


Fig. B.7 Home in Wan Chai v1, image by author.

I did not have the image. I sent this drawing to Aunty B, who soon offered to sketch a plan drawing for me.

Can you tell me more about the “empty space” in your house? Did you have a garden there?

No, no, the empty space could be a garden, but it was just storage. It’s an empty space. Because my dad is in the construction business, there are construction tools stored in it. Sometimes they have visitors come in and talk business. The ground floor is commercial. The upstairs is a residential part.

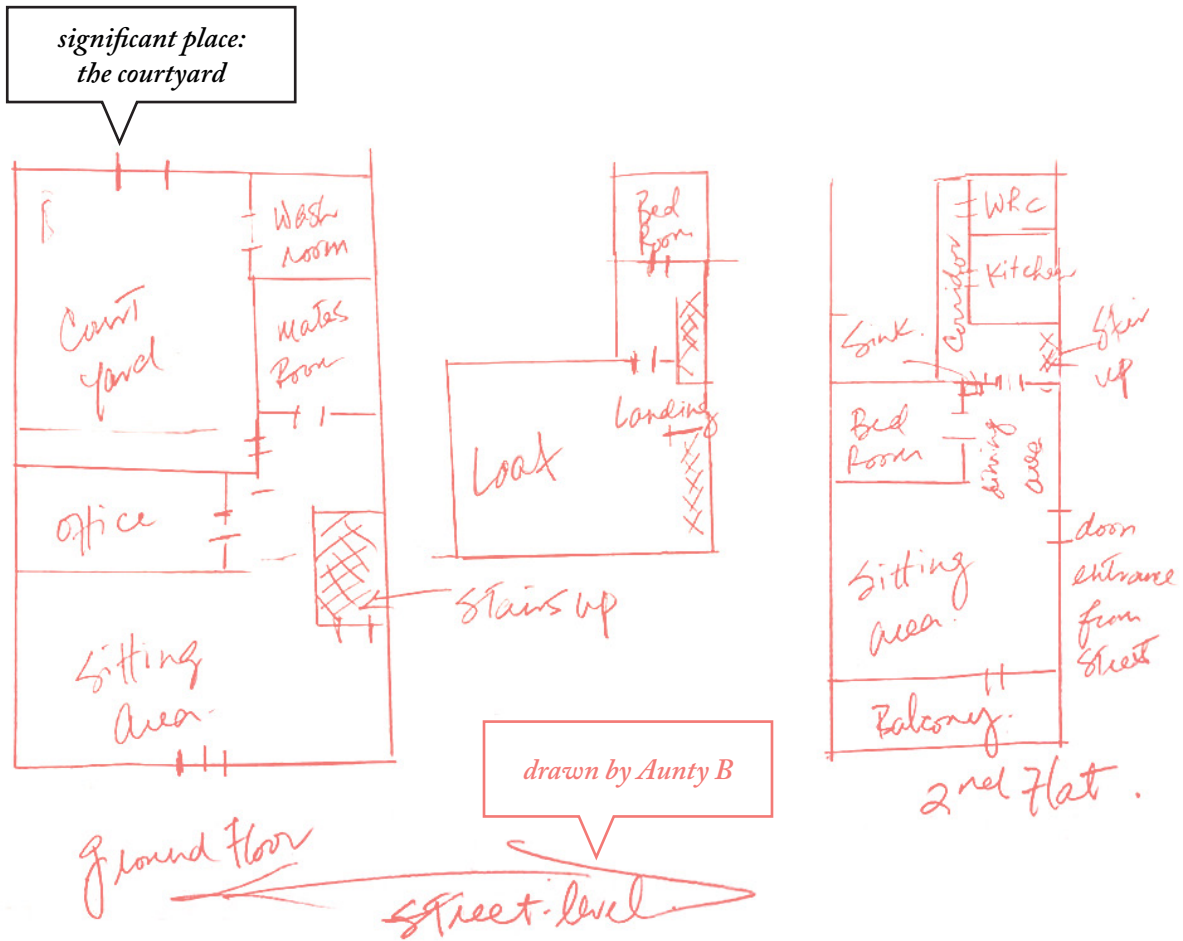


Fig. B.8 *Home in Wan Chai v2*, image by Aunty B.

After seeing Aunty B's drawing, her spatial descriptions made a lot more sense to me.

But I remember at one time, I don't know who, it could be one of the servants—she raised some chickens in the open space. I remember the chickens running around. And I went to pick up the eggs. And it's so cool to pick up the egg, because when they are laid, the shell is soft. And it makes sense because, if it falls on the ground, it will break. The air makes it get harder. It's so amazing, the science of chickens. It's so warm and soft. That was one of my adventures when I was a kid. We had a male chicken and every morning he would wake us up, like an alarm clock.

drawn by Natalie

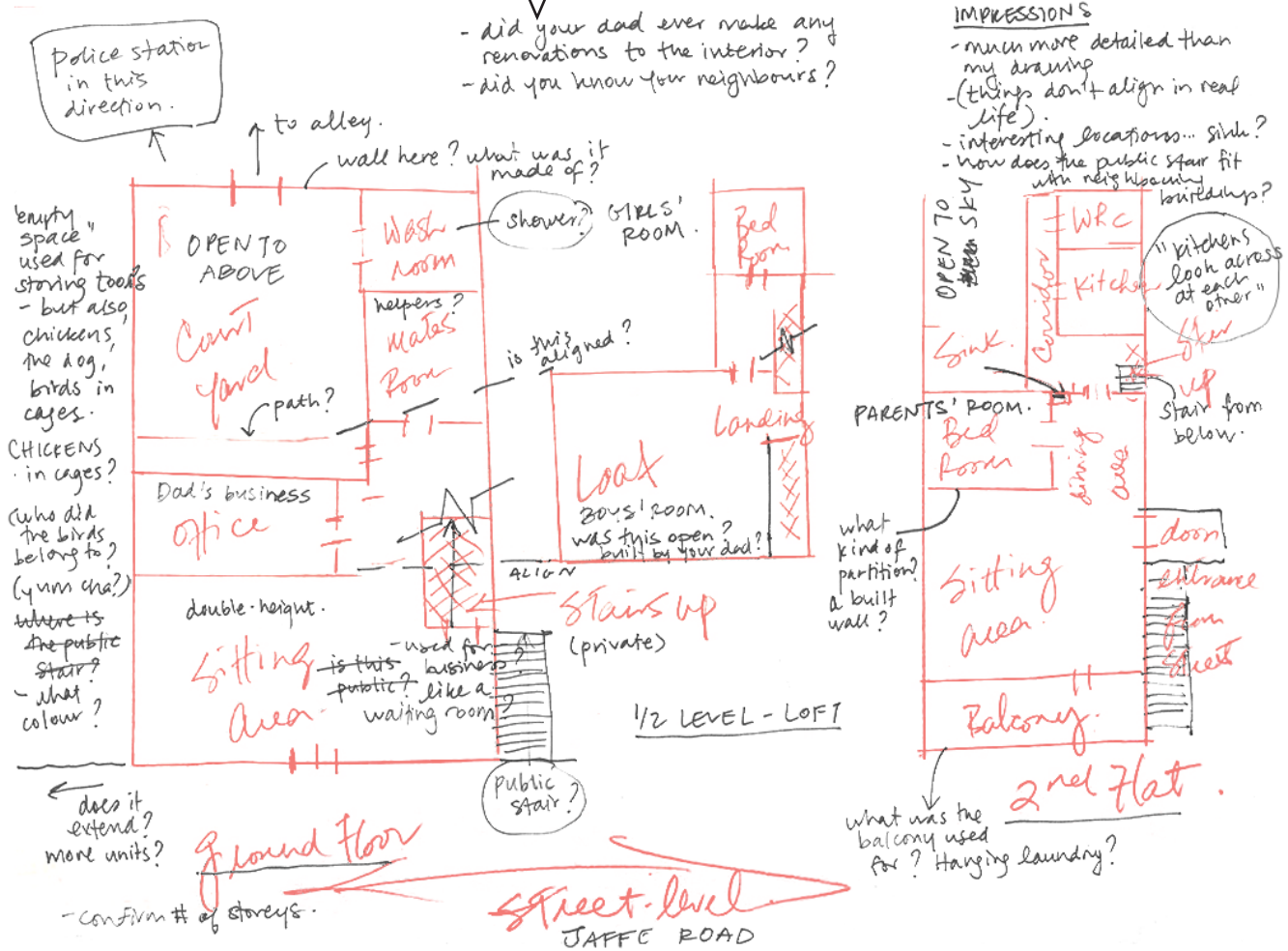


Fig. B.9 Home in Wan Chai v3, image by Aunty B and author.

I annotated the drawing with my questions about spaces in the drawing that I didn't understand yet.

We ate the chickens, and the eggs too. It's very cruel to see the chicken being killed for meals, but it's very common in those days, it's just that we don't see them killed daily here. When you personally experience it, you feel bad. And then unfortunately they got sick, I remember that. After that, you know, no more chickens.

We also used to have a dog. But the thing is, I don't think we knew how to take care of the dog. They just let him do his business in the empty space down there.

I think at one time we had birds too in a cage, we also kept them in the empty space.

The thing is, in China in those days, they would build a big house and the family lived together. But as their kids grow and they got married, they build their quarters around it. That's why they have a courtyard. The courtyard is for gatherings, and the kids play in it.

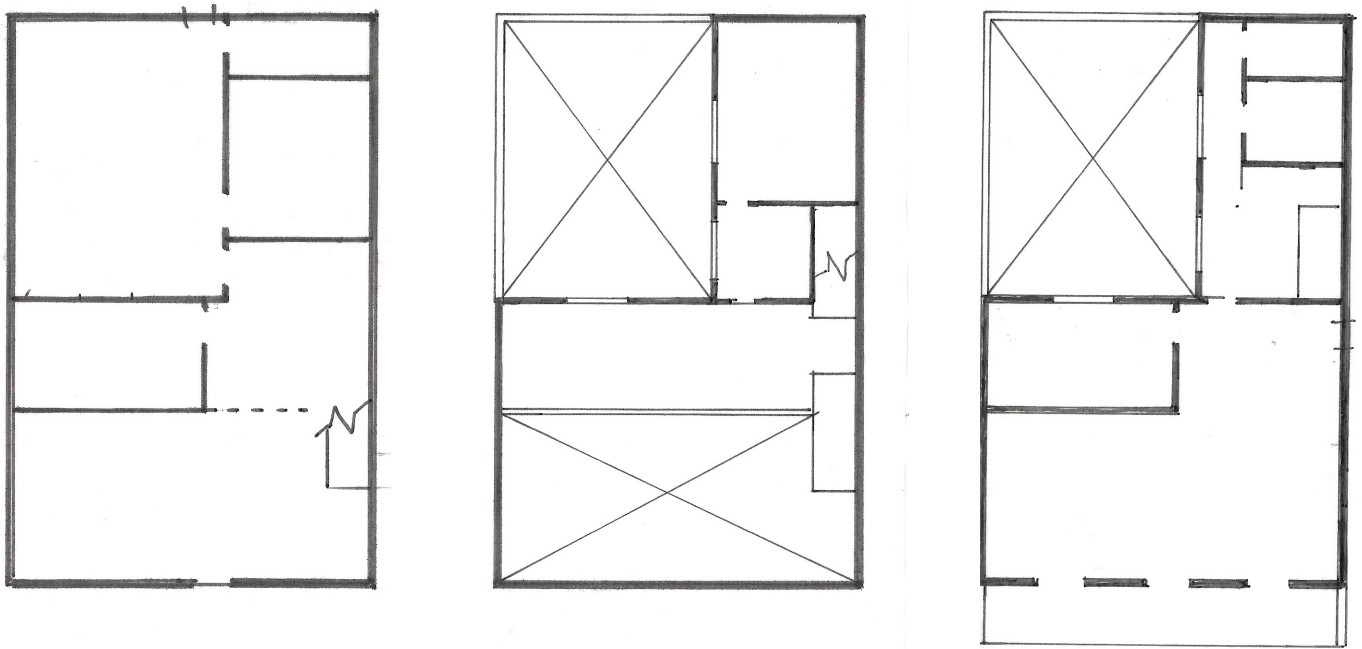


Fig. B.11 *Home in Wan Chai v5*, image by author.

I ended up drafting overtop of her drawing using dimensions found online.

Because my dad is the oldest child, he is considered pretty important, right? The eldest son in the family. Because it's very affordable for him, all his siblings and his family, come over for the Chinese New Year. They had to host the dinner and I remember they set up everything in the courtyard.

So then the gathering would be held in the sitting room in front of the office as well as in the second floor.

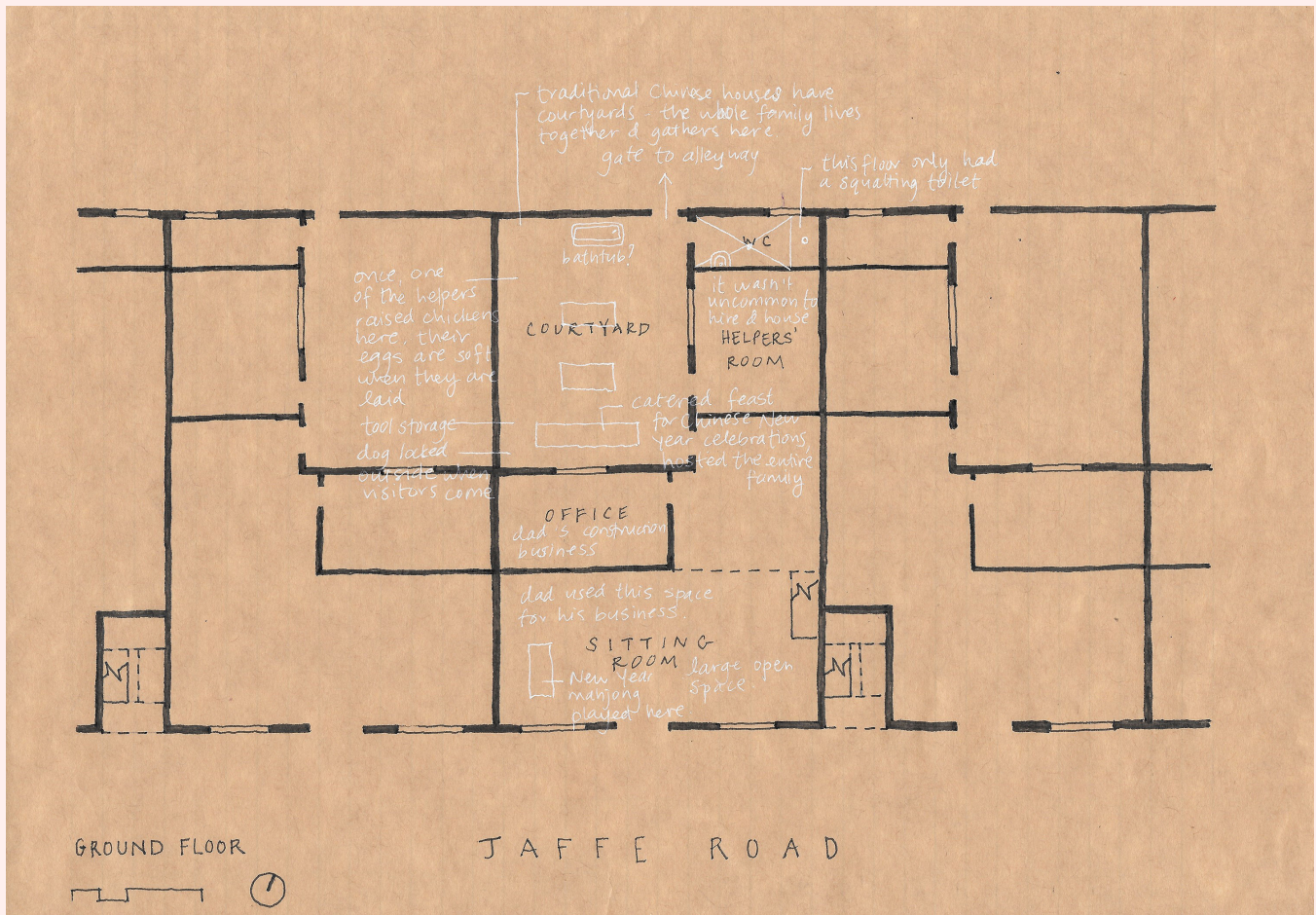


Fig. B.12 Home in Wan Chai ground floor plan, image by author.

In the “final” drawings for this conversation, memories are indicated in white.

All my cousins would be there. And my aunts, my uncles, and some of their close friends for a big feast. They bring the cooking utensils and they cook in the courtyard. And then they set up tables where the sitting room is, quite a few tables. Everybody had a pretty big family, you know. And the adults will play *mah jong* during the day until dinnertime.

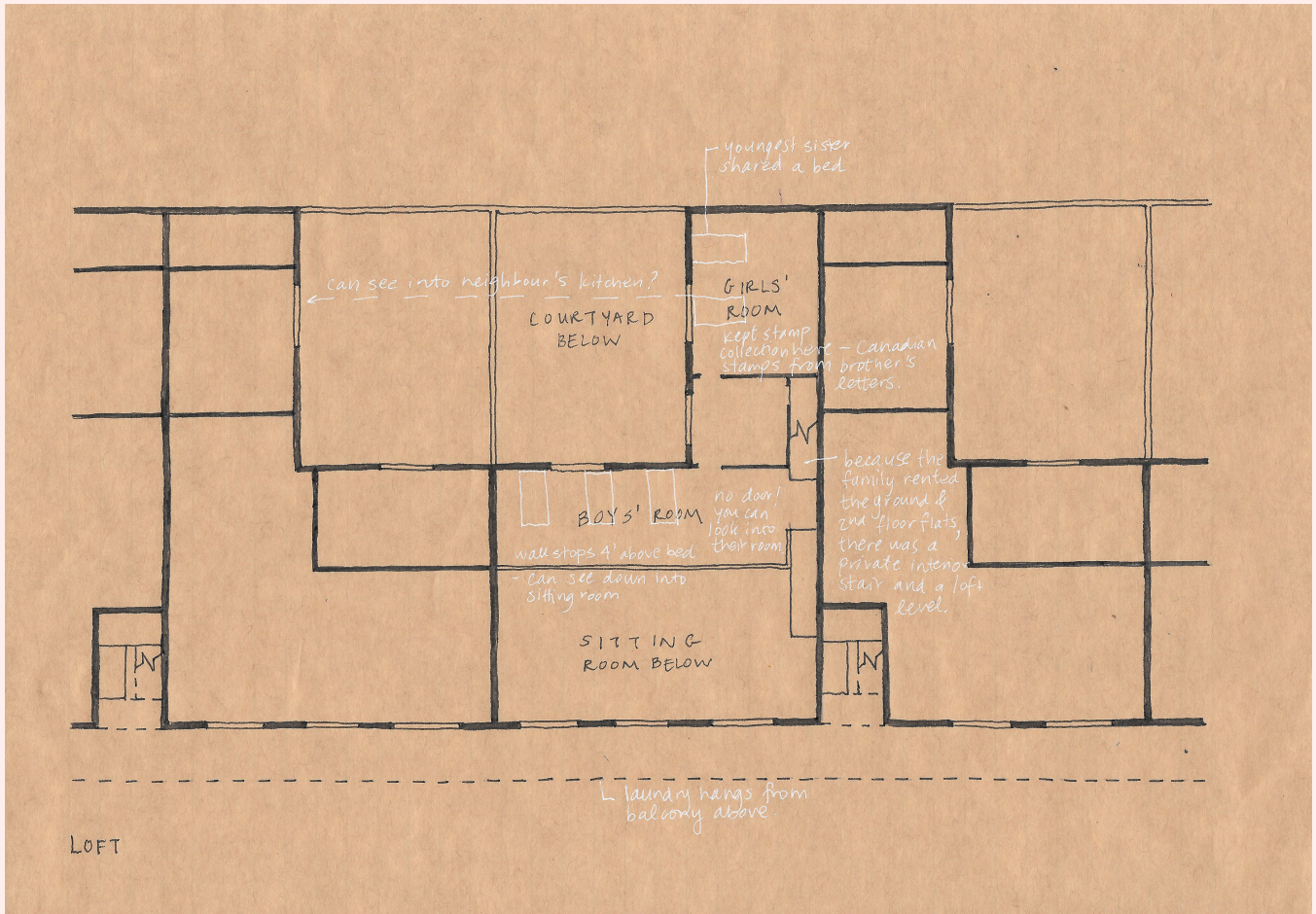


Fig. B.13 *Home in Wan Chai loft floor plan*, image by author.

I kind of miss that, like the big family gathering.

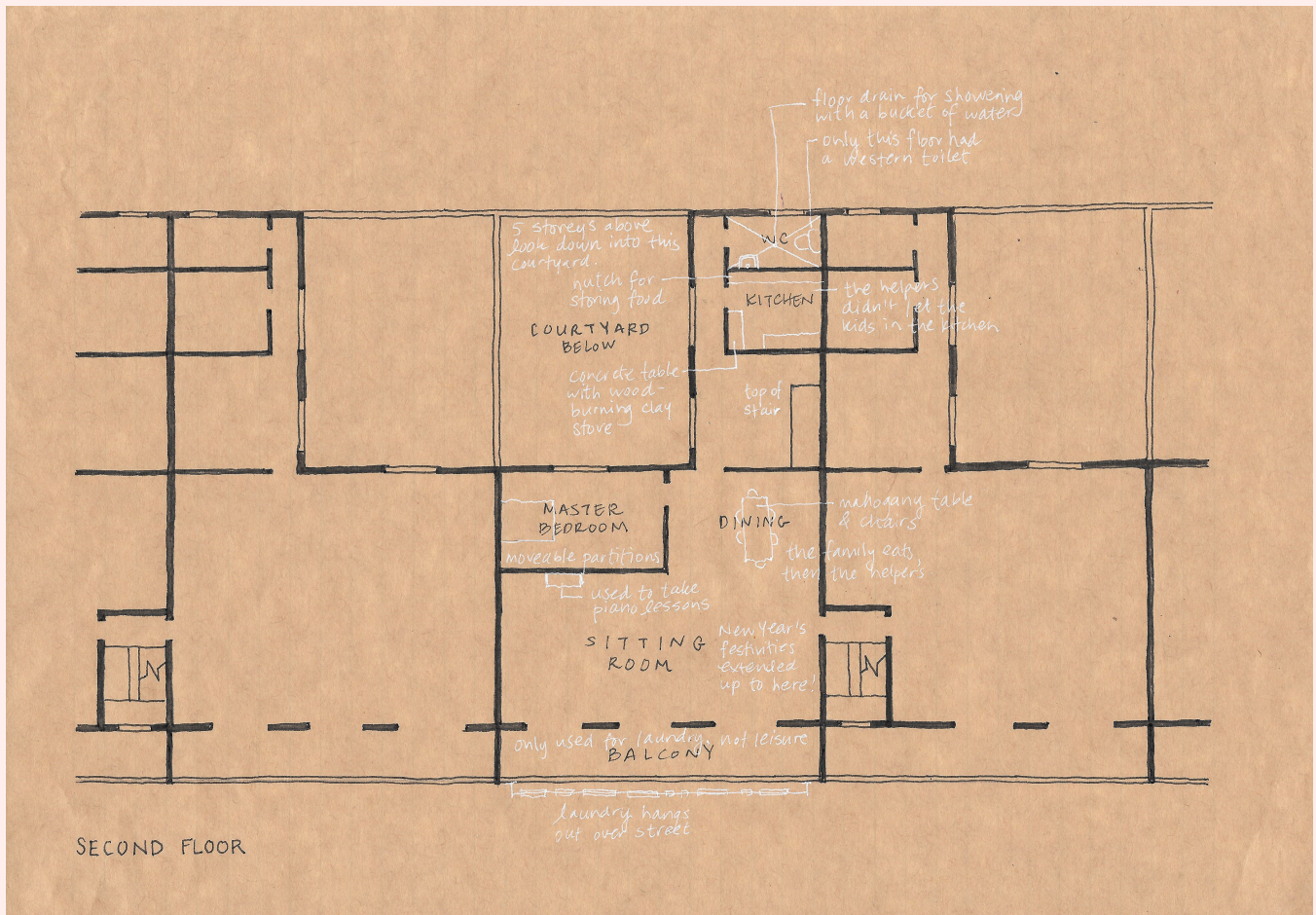


Fig. B.14 Home in Wan Chai second floor plan, image by author.

On empty space

8 My first impression was that those who had servants in Hong Kong must be very wealthy, but Aunty B explains that it was common for middle-class families to provide room and board for people escaping China.

When Aunty B describes empty space, it's not at all what I would consider "empty." To me, empty space is blank, a void, a mystery. It's what all the rooms without labels are, or the awkward spaces in my plans that I don't have the memories to fill. Empty space is the historic plans of the now-demolished buildings on Jaffe Road, which don't appear to be available online. I want to fill each one with answers. How many beds are in that room, and where are they located? Are there many windows? What do you see when you look towards the door? Where does the staircase begin and end? All the plans I draw seem empty to me. I want them to have dimensions, to fit together.

Aunty B refers to the courtyard as "empty space," but sometimes it has chickens in it; or they put the dog there when visitors come over; or her brother keeps birds there; or it's animated with a feast and *mah jong* tables as relatives return home for Lunar New Year celebrations. Some of the rooms house family members, while others hold meetings for her father's construction business, and still more are occupied by live-in servants.⁸ The house itself seems to be full of life at times, and dormant at others, but never empty.

I take the drawings she sketches, estimate a scale based on historic plans, and draft over them to scale because that's what I've learned to do as a designer. However, these "good copies" are less evocative than I'd hoped and seem to pretend an authority that they do not possess. I remind myself that the goal of this project is not to exactly replicate a past reality, and that empty spaces are an inherent quality of remembered experiences.

Home leaves space for possibility.

2022

Mississauga

Ontario, Canada

Can you describe what you do for Lunar New Year now?

Oh, now. Not much. The thing is, some days it's on a work day, right during the week. So then it's hard for family gatherings. But usually, we celebrate the new year and we have a family dinner gathering on the weekend. Okay, probably a week before the New Year because the Chinese restaurants are always busy. So we'll go a week ahead, right? And celebrate it early with my kids.

Then they will come over on the weekend to my house and we will have our own family dinner.



Fig. B.15 Kitchen, image by Aunty B.



Fig. B.16 Staircase, image by Aunty B.

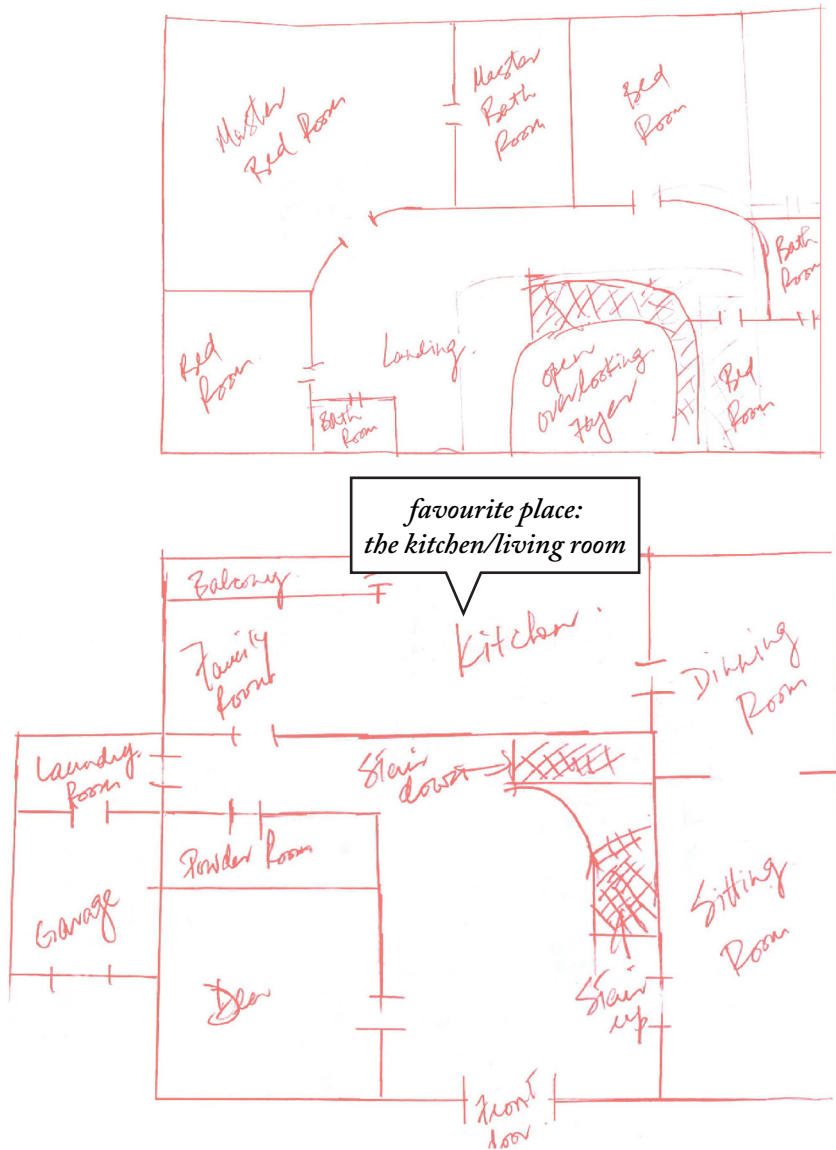


Fig. B.17 Home in Mississauga, image by Aunty B.

Did you bring any objects with you from Hong Kong?

I brought my stamps. It's the only thing I brought with me besides my clothes.

What kind of stamps did you collect?

I just collected them because I got them from Canada, on the letters that my brothers sent me. I thought to collect them because they were foreign stamps.

Where did you keep them?

I have a book for stamps, with plastic pockets, I keep it in the basement. I told my grandson but he's not interested yet.



Fig. B.18 Stamp collection, images by Aunty B.

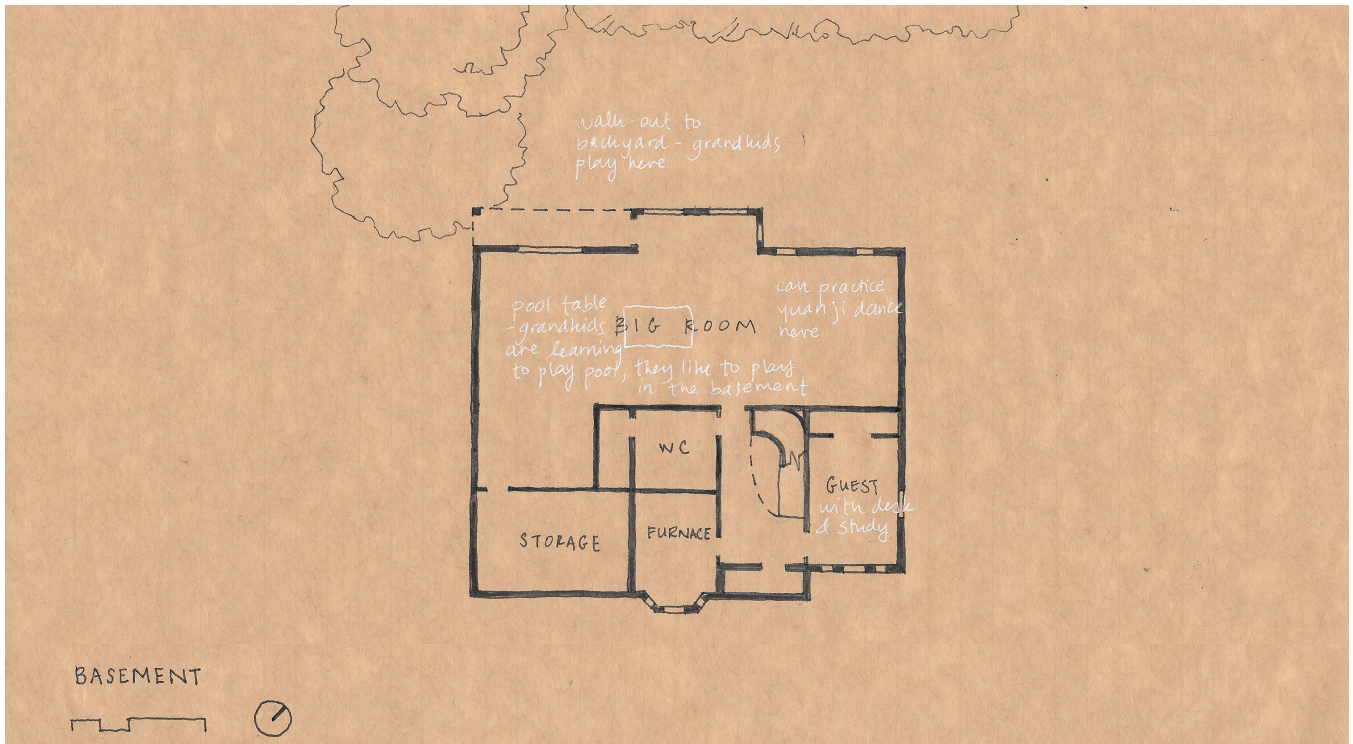


Fig. B.19 Home in Mississauga, image by author.

What kind of daily activities do you do?

I don't know if you ever heard of this dance called *Yuan Ji*. I love it because we do it in the mall in the morning before 10:00 a.m., before they open. And they have about 15 or 16 different dances with music. First they have stretching exercises, and then they use the stretching and some other movements to develop the dance. So then we do that, and we do different dances every day. We used to go every day, but now we can't because of the pandemic.

Where do you dance now?

I could do it in my bedroom, or in the basement. Dancing in the park of course, that's the best.

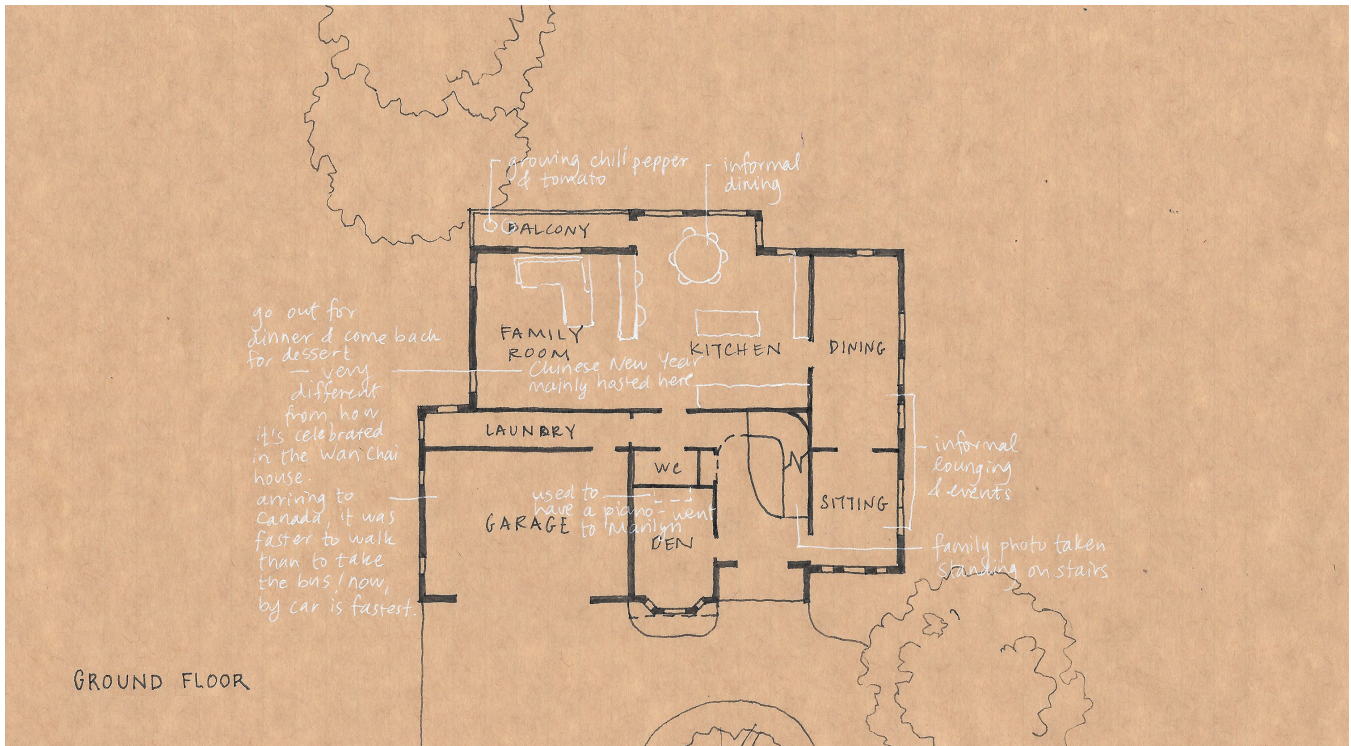
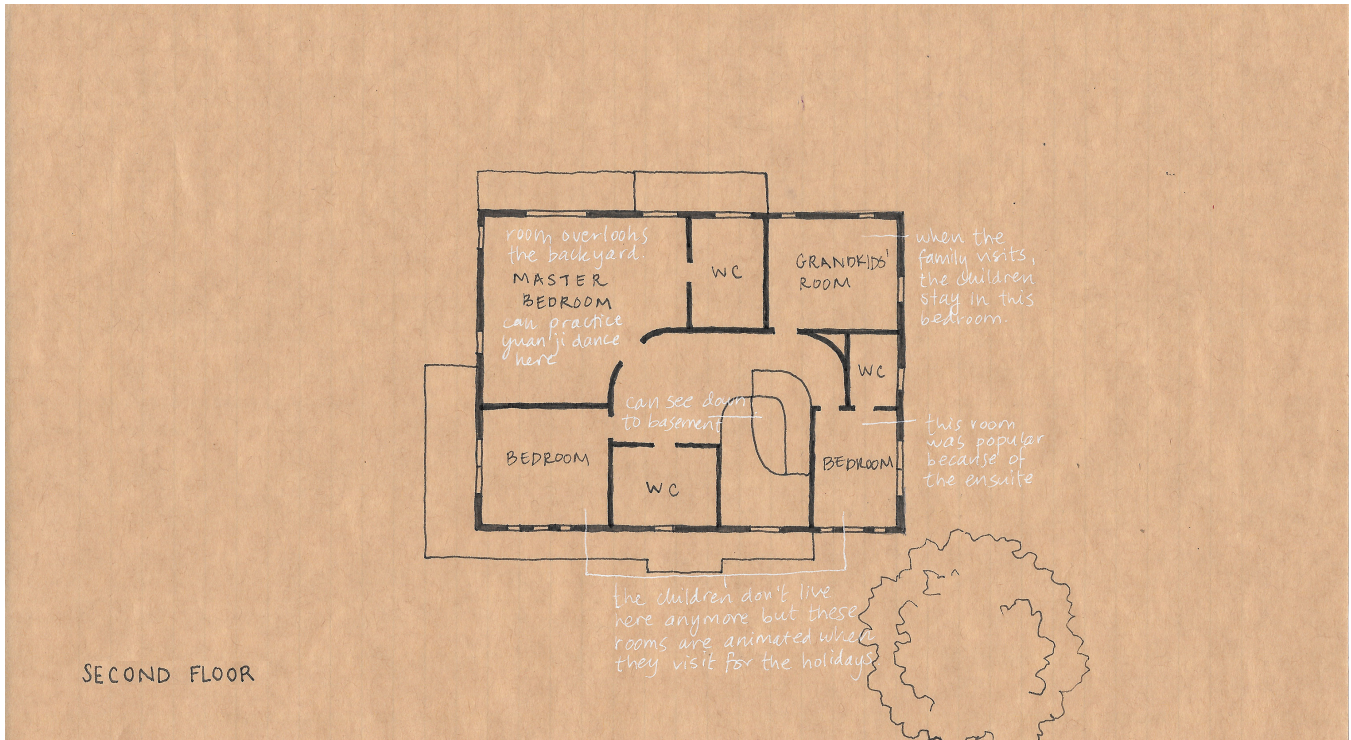


Fig. B.20 Home in Mississauga, images by author.

On routine

9 See description of the ethnoburbs in Part One: Diasporic Homes.

10 Wen-Lan Wu et al., “The Effect of Chinese Yuanji-Dance on Dynamic Balance and the Associated Attentional Demands in Elderly Adults,” *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine* 9 (March 1, 2010): 119–26; “Yuanji,” accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.indigenouspeople.net/YuanJi/>; Woodside Square Mall, “Community,” accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.woodsidesquare.com/community>.

I’m intrigued by Auntie B’s stamp collection. It’s evidence of a transnational network, as a record of correspondence from her family members who wrote to her from a foreign land—a land that she now inhabits. The rows of Queen Elizabeth II’s face smile at me, reminding me of the colonial connection between here and there. When Auntie B describes the Canadian stamps, she still calls them “foreign,” as if she still lived in Hong Kong.

We spend some time discussing transnational networks, and Auntie B brings up *yuan ji* dance.⁹ It seems that in the past 20 years, this form of dance has become very popular with Chinese seniors. The moves are less strenuous than other traditional martial arts exercises like *tai chi*. I find various journal articles and shopping mall websites extolling the virtues of its social and physical benefits for seniors.¹⁰ Dedicated groups practise *yuan ji* in parks, malls, and community centres all over North America and Taiwan, forming a global network of disparate people, performing the same moves in different places. Since the pandemic prevents people from going to the mall during lockdown, Auntie B says she can still practise the dance wherever she has space: in her basement, in her bedroom. This reminds me of the way that the courtyard in her childhood home changed function based on the family’s needs. I hadn’t thought of a basement as a place to dance.

Home is found in transnational routines.

Is there anything about your current house that you would love to change?

I'm pretty happy. Ah, maybe my master bedroom has a little bit of space wasted. It's too big. I don't know. I'm still using that space, but I do have a little L shape at the end of the master and it's an empty space. I use it for sewing, right? But if I could have a room there, instead of in my bedroom, and separate it—then I can do my sewing there even at night, right? I don't know how. Not that I'm not happy about it, but it's an idea that I have.

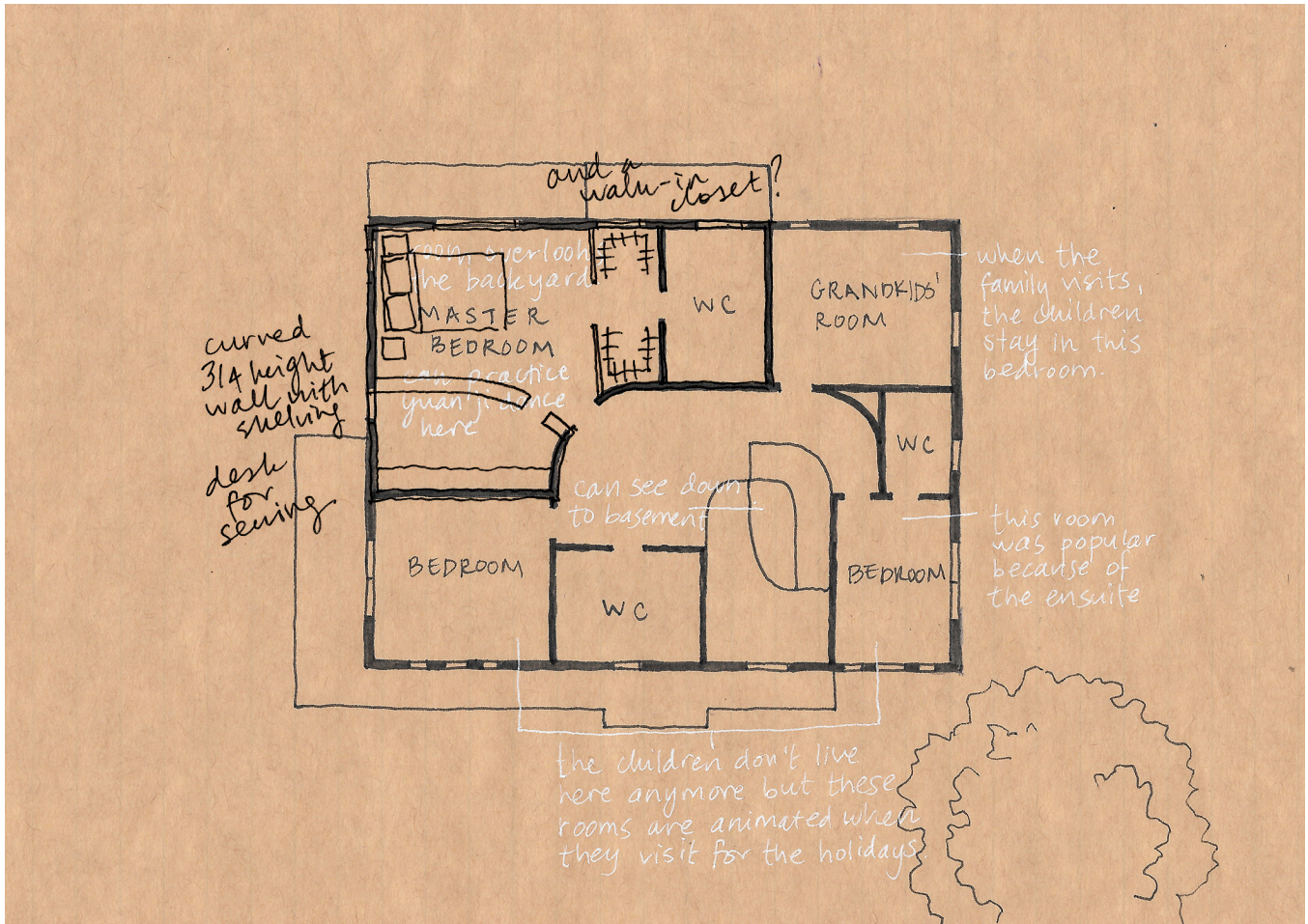


Fig. B.21 *Home in Mississauga*, image by author.

After speaking with Aunty B, I sketched a proposal for the sewing room to discuss with her.

Last time we talked, you mentioned the idea of a sewing room in the bedroom! I sketched a place for the sewing room that I wanted to talk about with you.

I looked at your draft, there's something not appropriately presented there.

Sure, what is it?

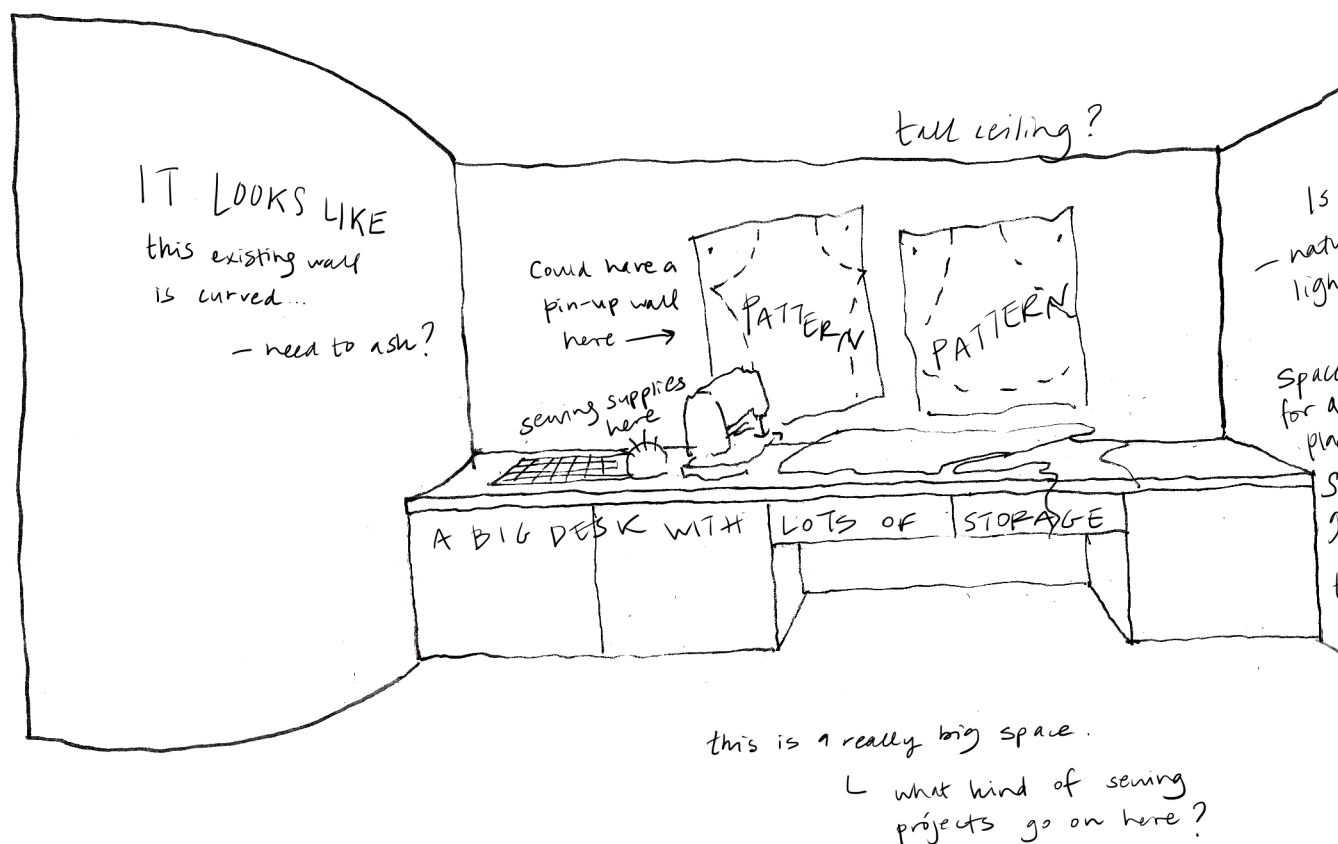
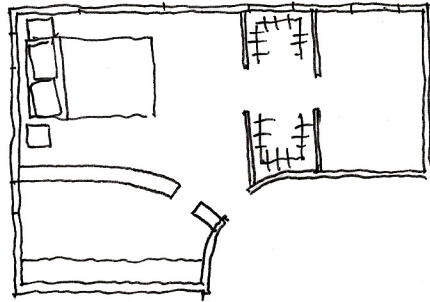


Fig. B.22 Sewing room proposal, image by author.

and a walk-in closet?

curved 314 height wall with shelving
desk for sewing



maybe similar to partitioned home in HK?

not quite full height partition



it bright?
EXISTING WINDOW
plant?
rows tomatoes on the balcony

← curve to reflect existing wall PROPOSED WALL →

In my bedroom, like beside the bed, it's the open space. And in that little space there I just have a table there as a sewing area. Next to it, is my closet.

OK, so is that along the bottom wall there?

The door that opens to my bedroom is an angle, so when you go in on the right hand side, there's my bathroom. The closet is on the left side, there's a wall and then the open space there. There's an empty space beside my bed. There's a window on the wall, and I have a table there against the other wall. I can draw it for you.

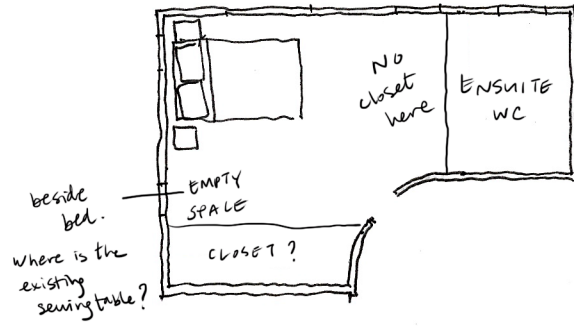


Fig. B.23 *Sewing room plan v1*, image by author.

Do you use the sewing area a lot?

I don't sew a lot, but my husband does. Well, he doesn't sew a lot either. Just if he has a pair of pants and he needs to shorten it. We are not sewing for passion, just when we need to fix things. That's why we have a machine there. But sometimes my kids, when they need to sew something or to fix something, they will come and use my machine. Because we have a little space, and we do have a desk there so we can put the machine up on the desk. So it's not meant to be a sewing room, but we use it like that.

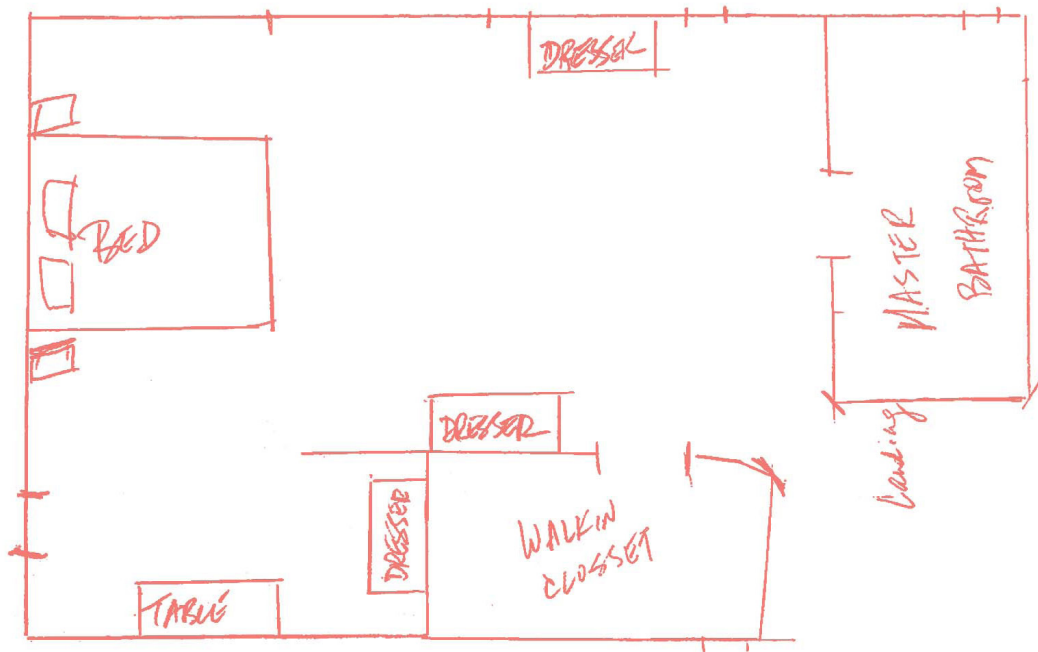


Fig. B.24 *Sewing room plan v2*, image by Aunty B.

This is what the existing room actually looks like, according to Aunty B.

Thanks for sending this drawing!
Is there anything you want to
change about the sewing room?
For example, to connect it with
the walk in closet, or to add more
shelves for storage?

I am pretty happy with the
existing layout. If I open up the
wall to the closet, then I will
lose some shelf space. Thanks
for the suggestion.

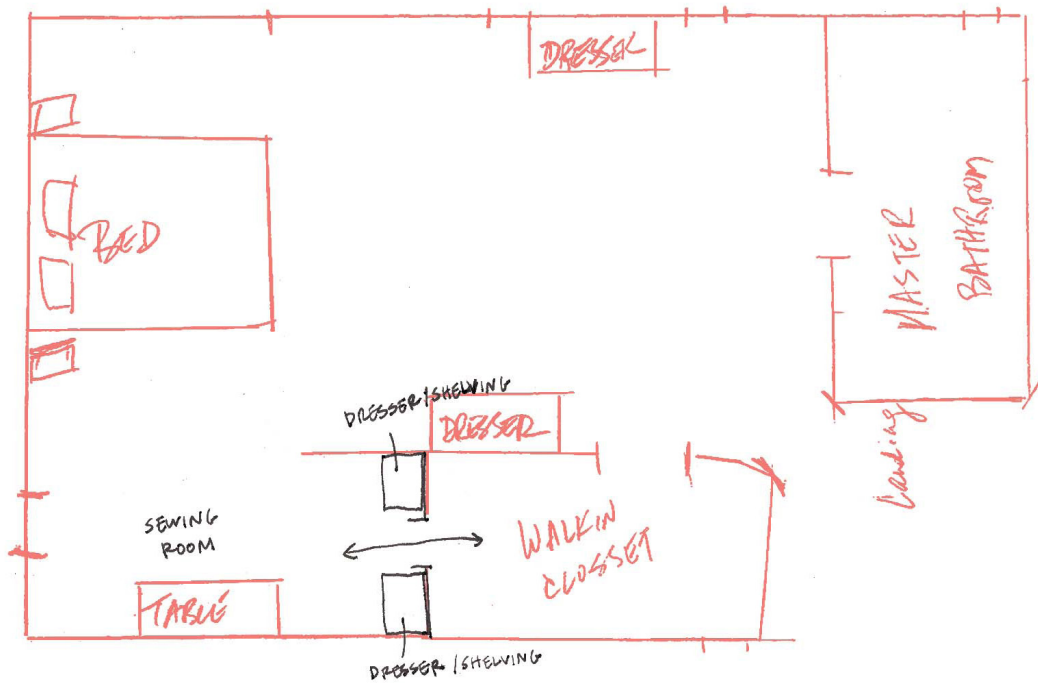


Fig. B.25 Sewing room plan v3, image by author.

Hmm, okay. Is there anything else that you think would make it easier for you and your kids to sew there? Like a bigger window or more light?

My window there is a good size, bright enough.

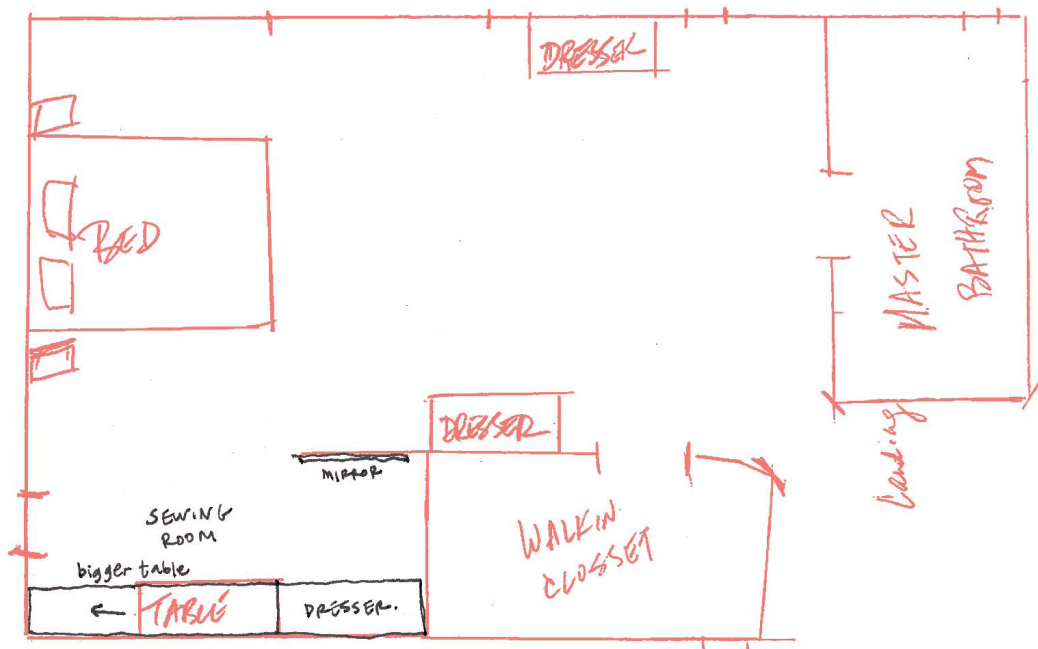


Fig. B.26 Sewing room plan v4, image by author.

Okay, one more idea. You mentioned that the bedroom is quite big—maybe something like this could use the space differently? If you prefer things how they are now, then that's okay too!

To make use of the space, I welcome the suggestion.

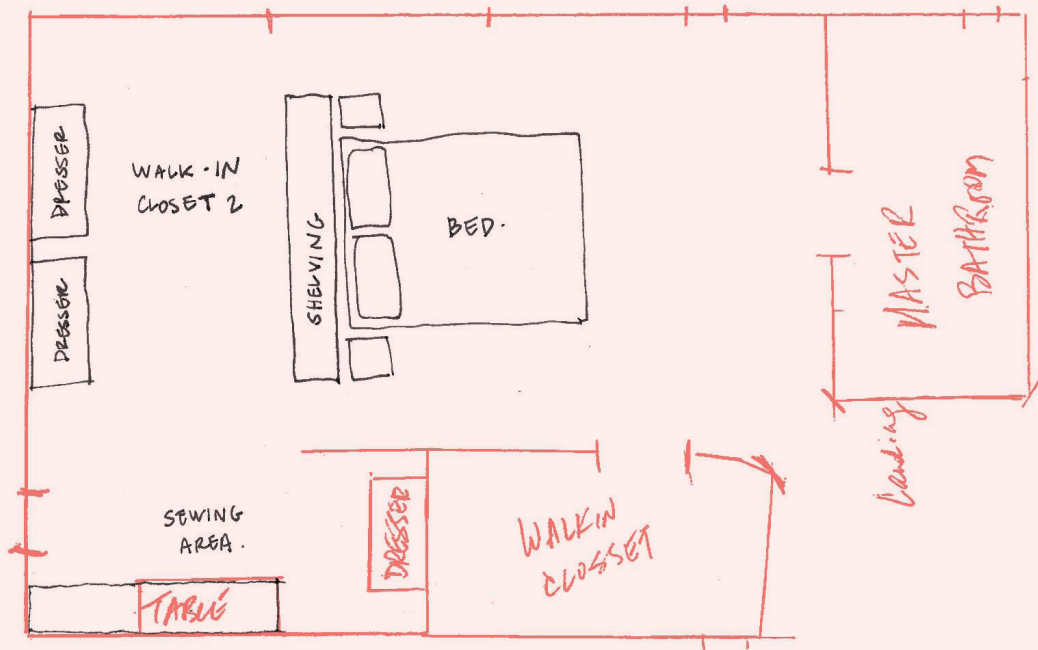


Fig. B.27 Sewing room plan v5, image by author.

A quick sketch of the room—is there anything important missing or that you think should change about this drawing?

That's great, like it.

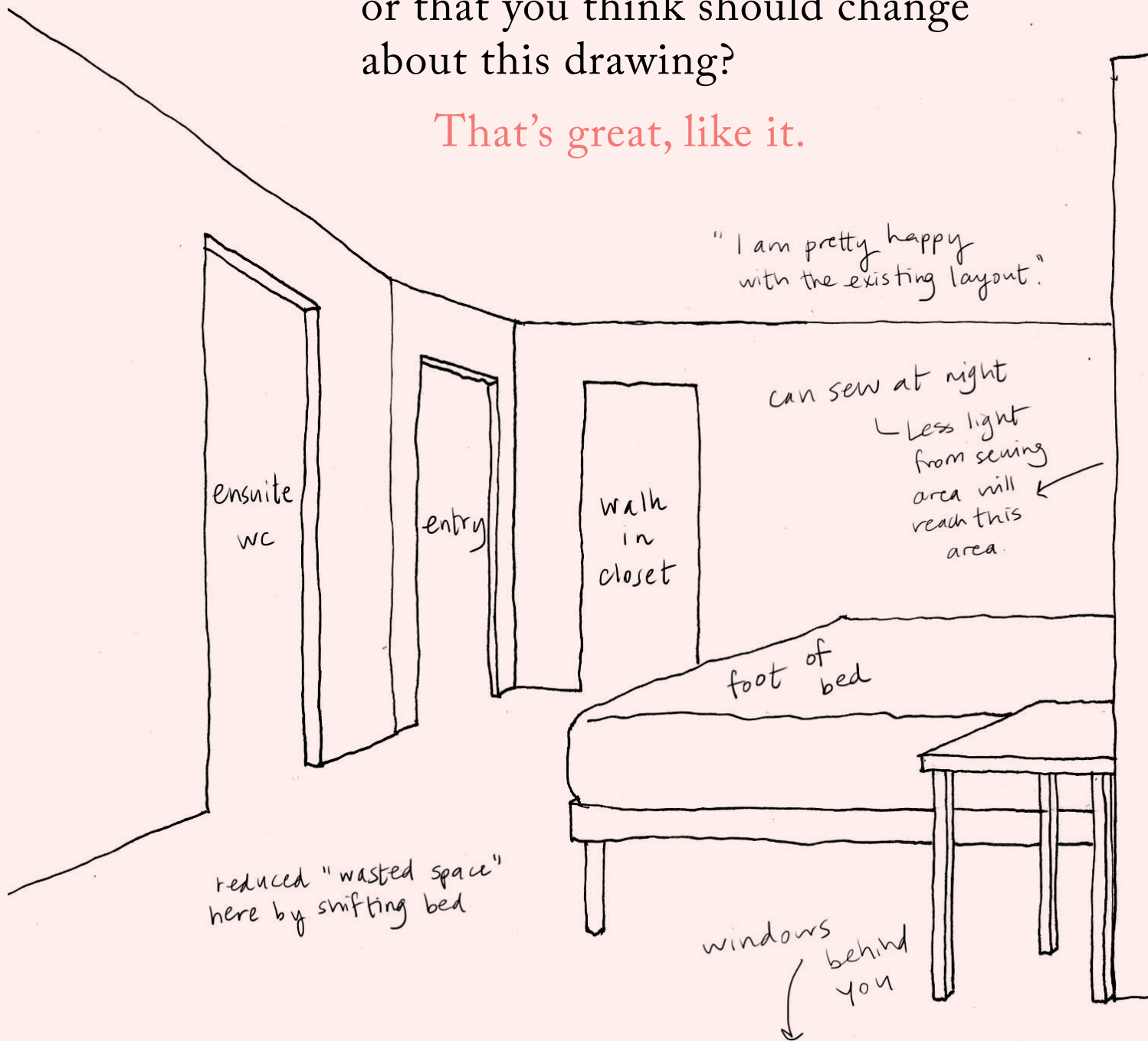
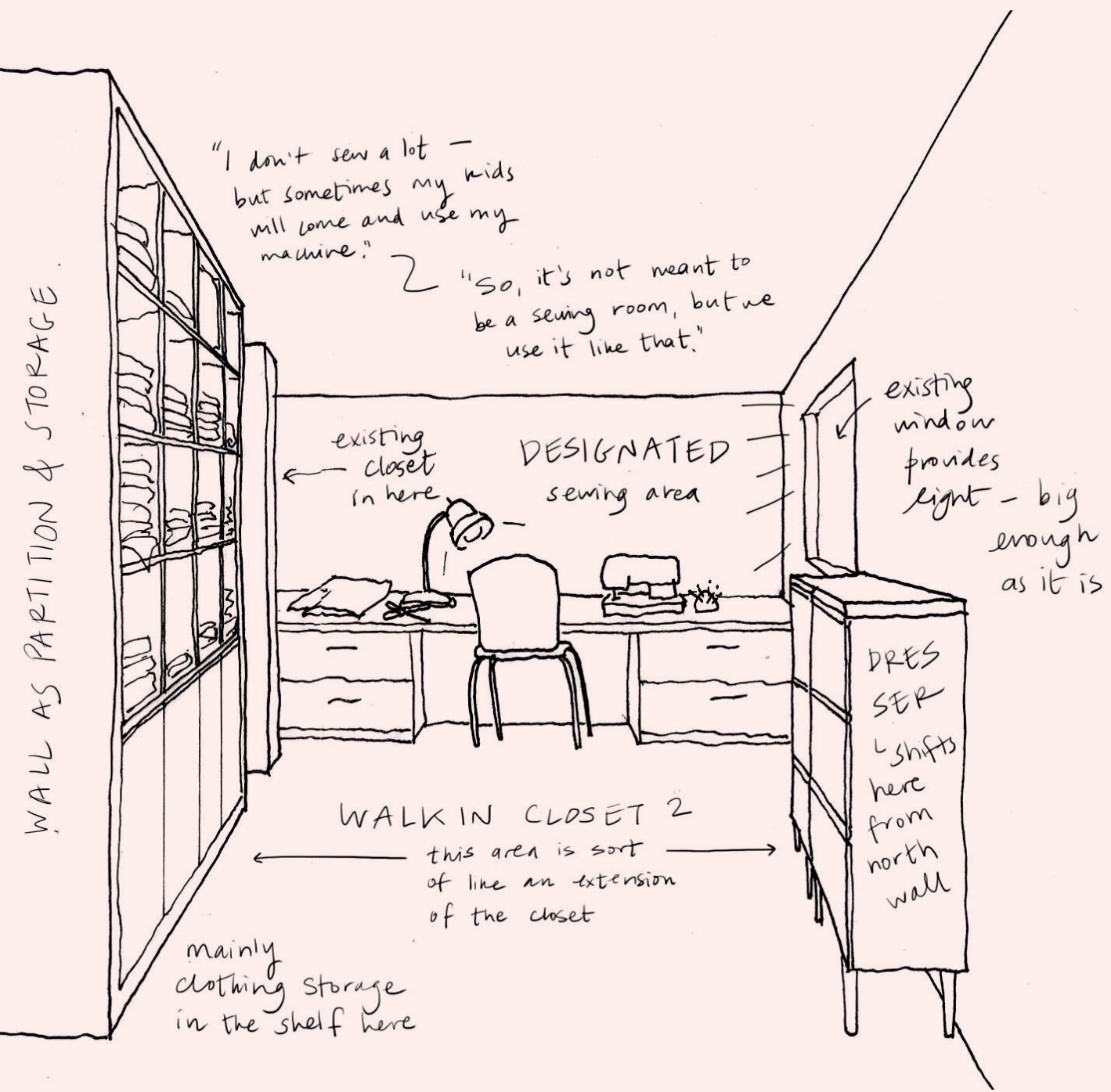


Fig. B.28 *A more practical sewing room proposal*, image by author.



On spatial purpose

In her current house, Aunty B seems hesitant to change anything at all. This notion is foreign to me, since I can't imagine a single space in my own house that couldn't be altered in some small way. We discuss back and forth on this; I suggest small changes until she relents and agrees to imagine reorganizing the bedroom to make space for the sewing room. This part of the process feels very different compared to my previous conversation with Aunty A, who had considered an alternate vision for the sunroom before I even asked. Aunty B is content with the current bedroom, and she doesn't realistically see the need for change.

I still make the drawings, to "complete" the conversation, but her hesitance towards change speaks to a different mentality about spatial function. Perhaps the bedroom and sewing area has already fulfilled its purpose as a multi-functional space, so taking down walls isn't worth the (imaginary) effort. It feels very clear to me that her use of the courtyard in Hong Kong and the sewing room in her current bedroom are connected through a purposeful and pragmatic mentality that no space should go to waste. These empty spaces are animated through a similar feeling of purpose and family gathering.

Home is purposeful space.

To summarize

Aunty B's use of the term "*empty space*" when referring to the courtyard actually encapsulated many other inhabitations. There are many different spatial interpretations embedded within language.

Practising *yuan ji* dance in the mall is a form of *transnational routine* that Aunty B performs daily, along with seniors of Chinese descent and varying other cultural backgrounds. This globalized form of dance can be found across North America and around the world.

Aunty B's current bedroom contains empty space that she currently uses as a sewing room for her and her family. Her desire to find *spatial purpose* for unused spaces in her current house is similar to her family's multipurpose use of her childhood courtyard.

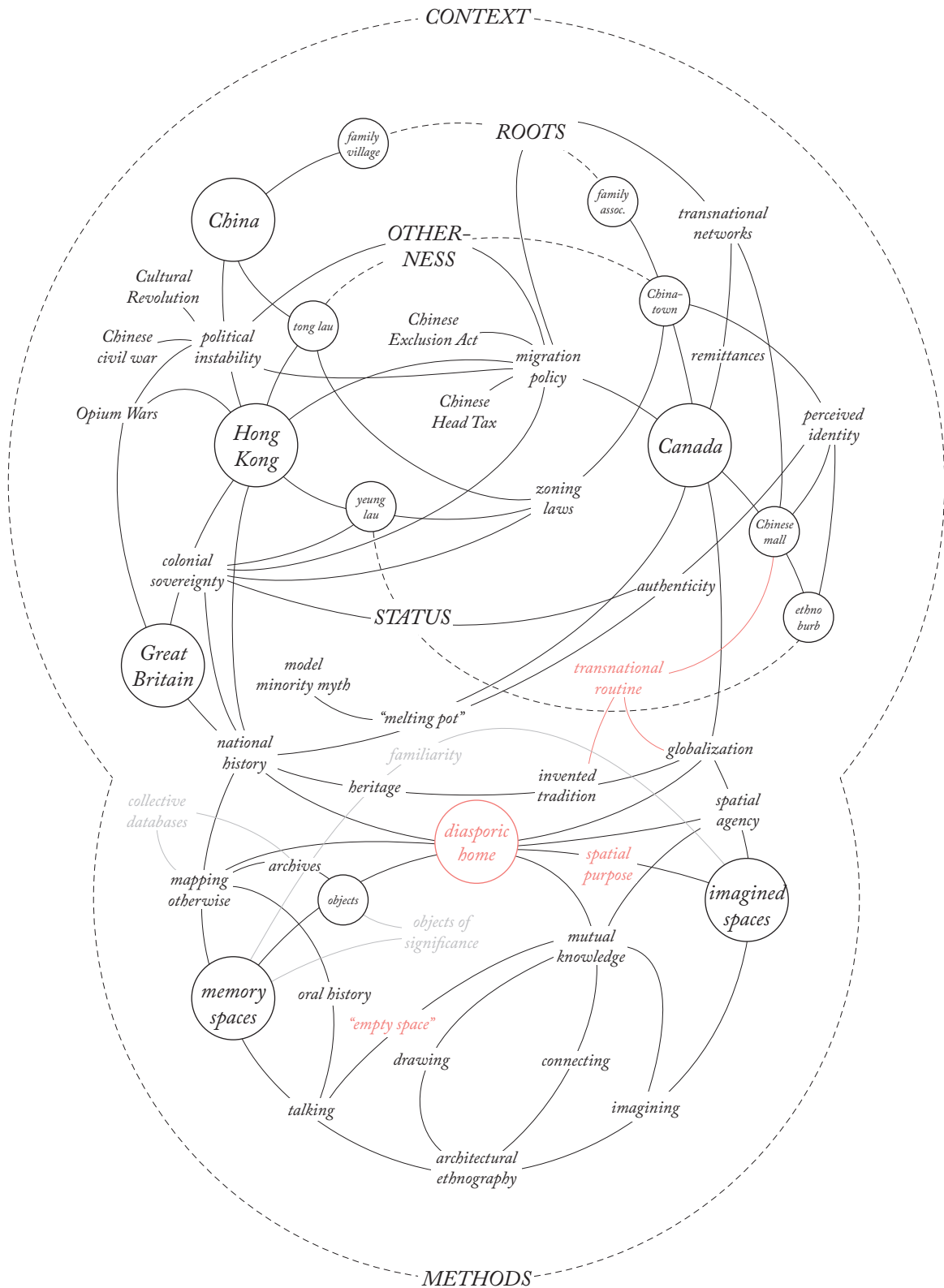


Fig. B.29 Thesis diagram, by author.

1970

In Hong Kong

*Wong Nai Chung Road
Happy Valley, Hong Kong*

18th-floor unit of a 25-storey condo

*6 people (5 family members, 1
servant)*

From the balcony of his childhood home, Uncle C could see the Happy Valley Racecourse. Although the balcony was small, he would sometimes stand outside with his brother to watch the horses run circles around the track. Occasionally on weekends, the family would visit Chek Chue. It's a beachy town, and they stayed in an apartment building near the old police station. Uncle C remembers walking up and down the shore, looking for seashells.

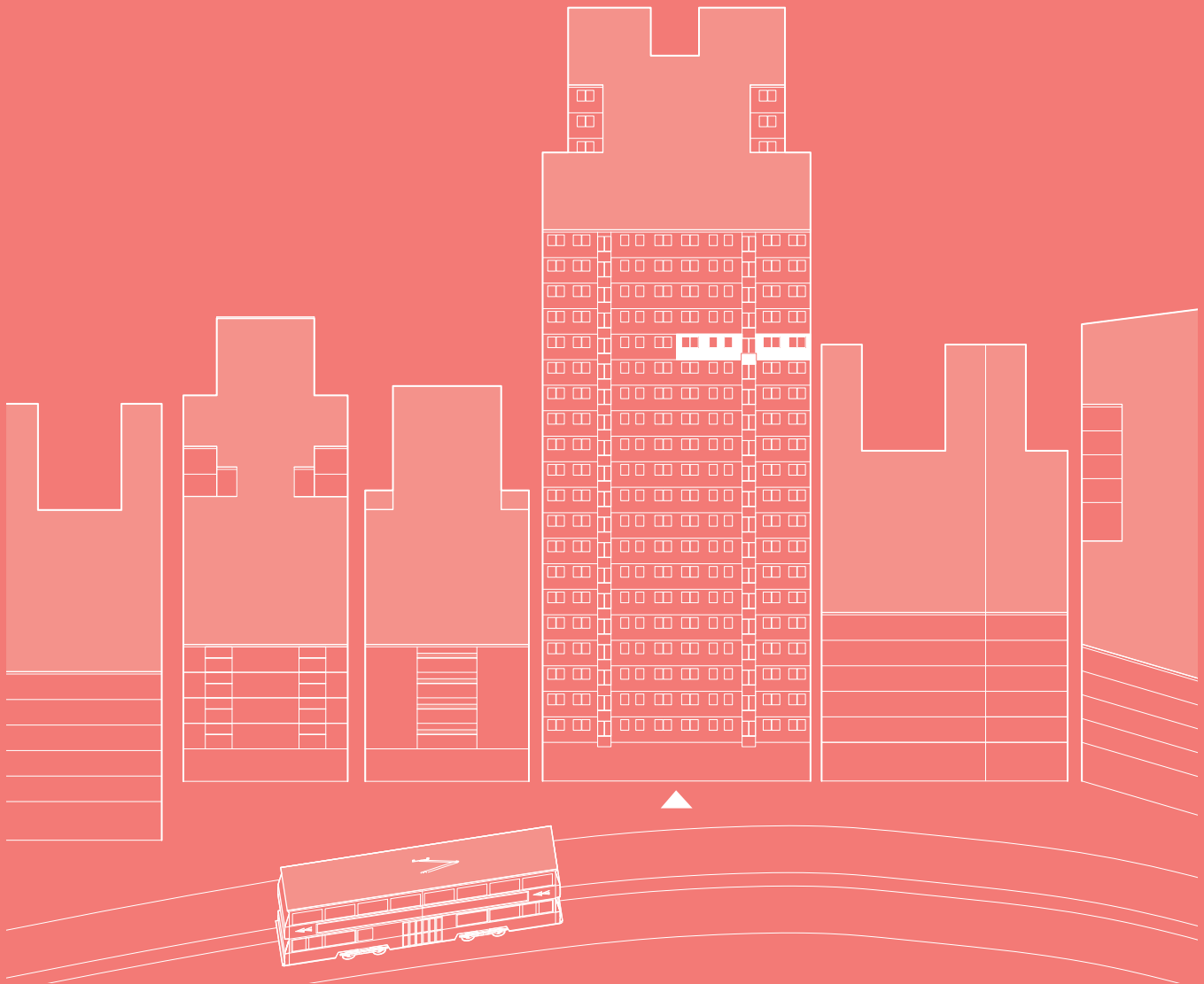


Fig. C.1 *Uncle C's home in Happy Valley*, image by author.

Uncle C's current home has a television in almost every room. He prefers spending time in the kitchen and living room. He suggested making changes to the house's unfinished basement. It used to be a games room before his son moved out, and now it's largely unoccupied by him and his wife. We considered a movie theatre and a guest room. In the end, we imagined a hot tub and sauna—a way to visit Chek Chue, without leaving the house.

*Scarborough
Ontario, Canada*

Bungalow

2 people

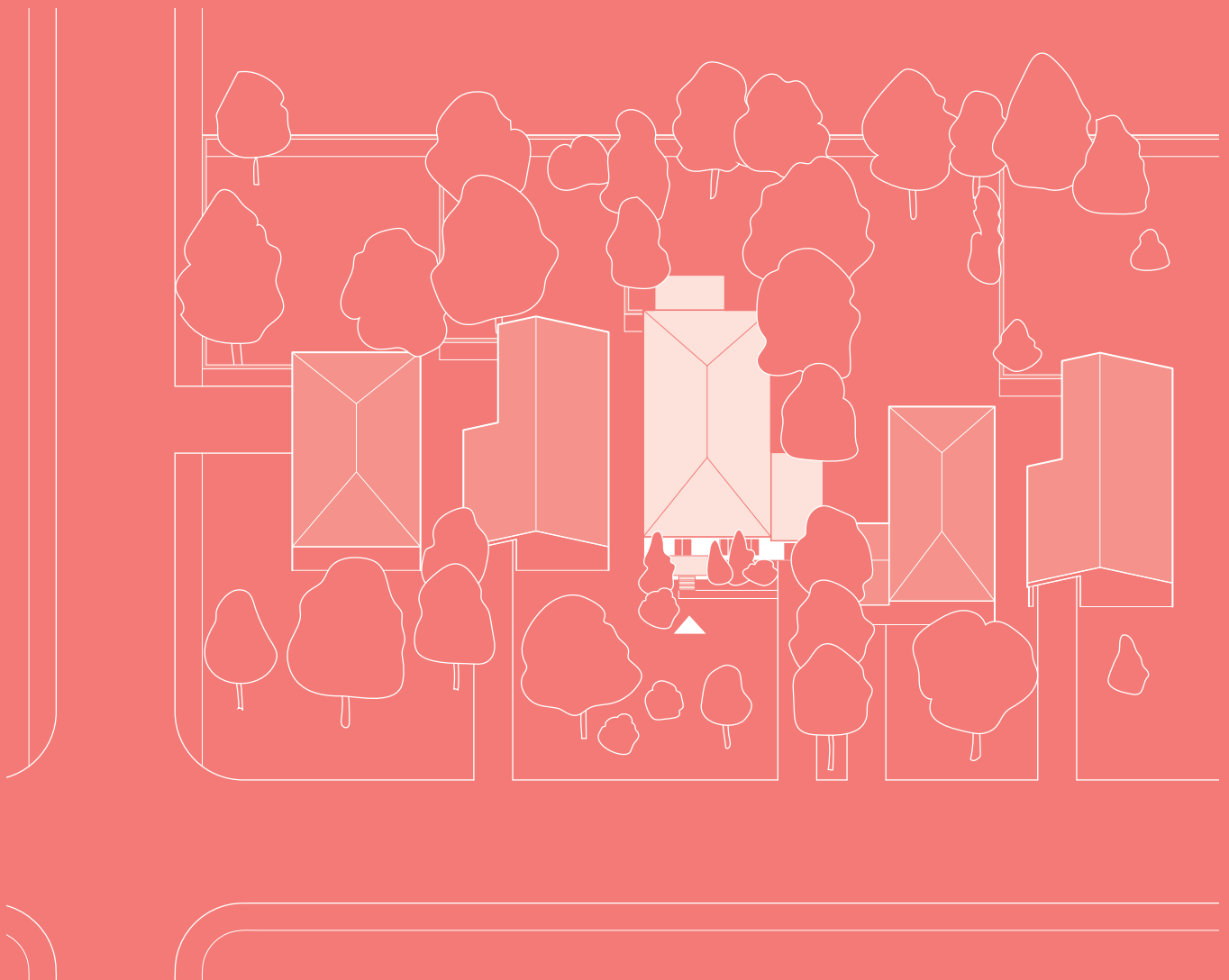


Fig. C.2 *Uncle C's home in Scarborough*, image by author.

1970

Wong Nai Chung Road

Happy Valley, Hong Kong

Natalie:

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Uncle C:

We have a hot water heater for the bathroom, not too many people have that back then. Also we can see the racetrack on our balcony.

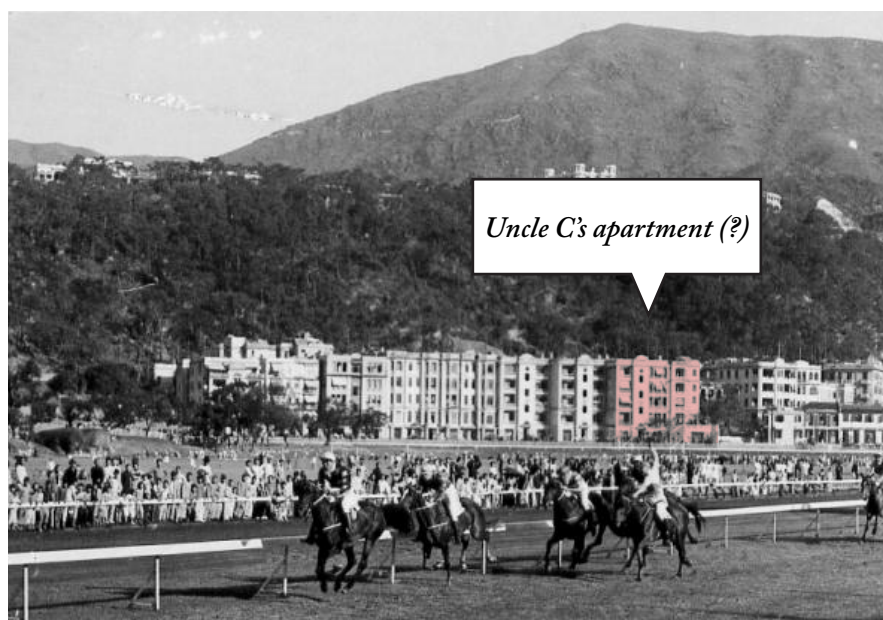


Fig. C.3 *Happy Valley Racetrack*, Michael Cussans, 1963, Gwulo.

Uncle C remembers living on around the 18th floor of a 25 storey building on the east side of the racecourse.

Fig. C.4 *A day at the races*, Ted Tharme, 1944–46, Commando Veterans Archive.

“That one looks like the right spot. Maybe if it was taller.”



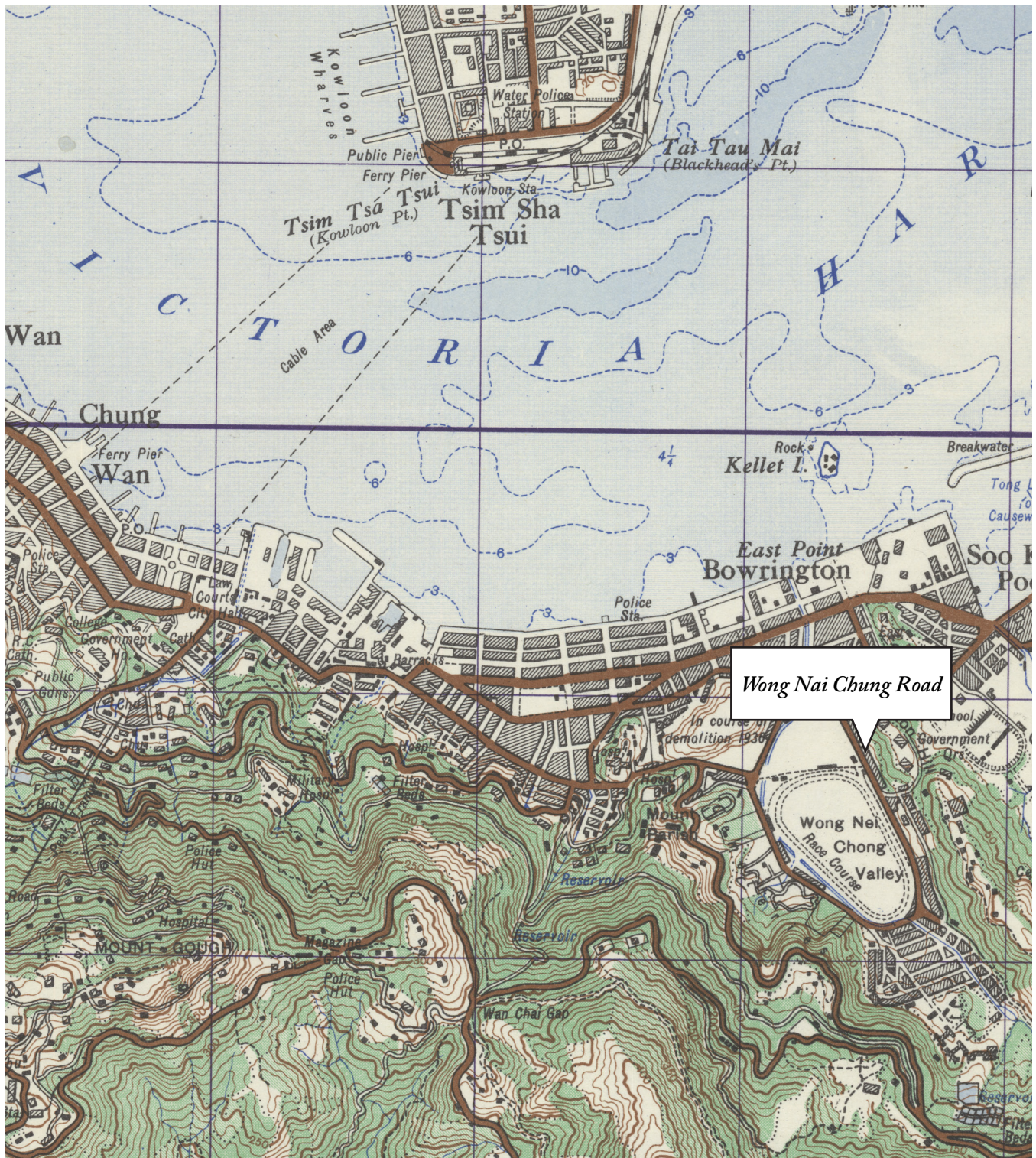


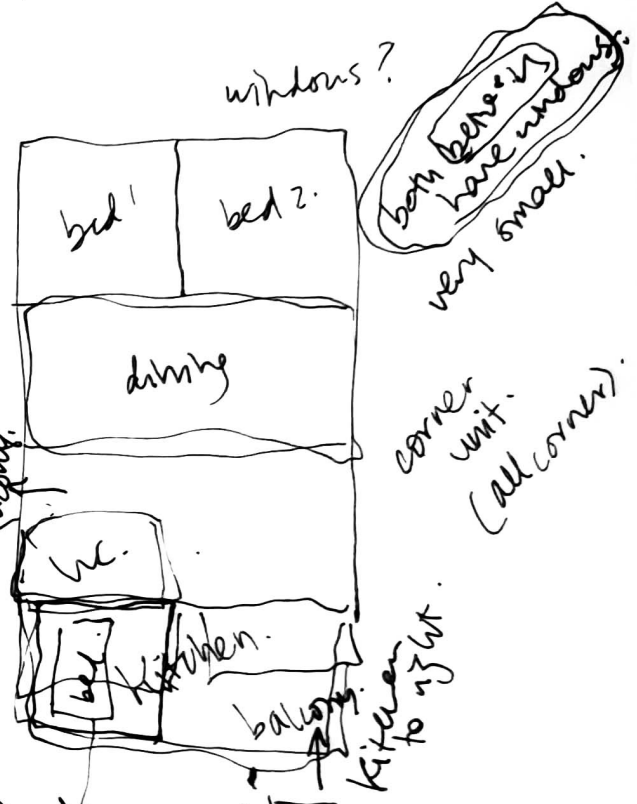
Fig. C.5 *Victoria Harbour: Hong Kong and New Territories*, Great Britain War Office, 1930, National Library of Australia.

Can you walk me through your childhood home?

It's a tall rectangular building. I think our apartment was on the higher floors. We had a very small balcony. Very small, so you just kind of opened the door and yeah, that's the end of it. So we—me and my brother—usually stand out there to watch the horse race sometimes. I guess that's our favourite place.

Walking eve
 - haven't been back for 20 years!
 L NO, only went back.
 been here for 50 years. - really far, long plane ride, 28 hours.
 close to wanchai.

TALL, rectangular.



2. parents
 3 kids → shared a room. bed
 (5) → altogether.
 separate washroom.
 kitchen.
 2 bedrooms.
 dining.

A condo unit. 18th floor.

- stand to watch the horse race.

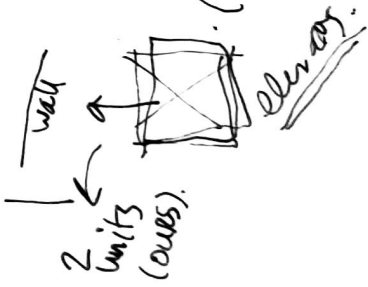


Fig. C.6 Plan sketches, image by author.

I sketched as we talked, but didn't manage to resolve the floor plan.

Can you tell me more about the balcony?

The door is very heavy, I can remember that it's hard to open for us. There's three glass sections, I guess it's like French doors. You can definitely hear people cheering, and all the streetcar noises from the street below.

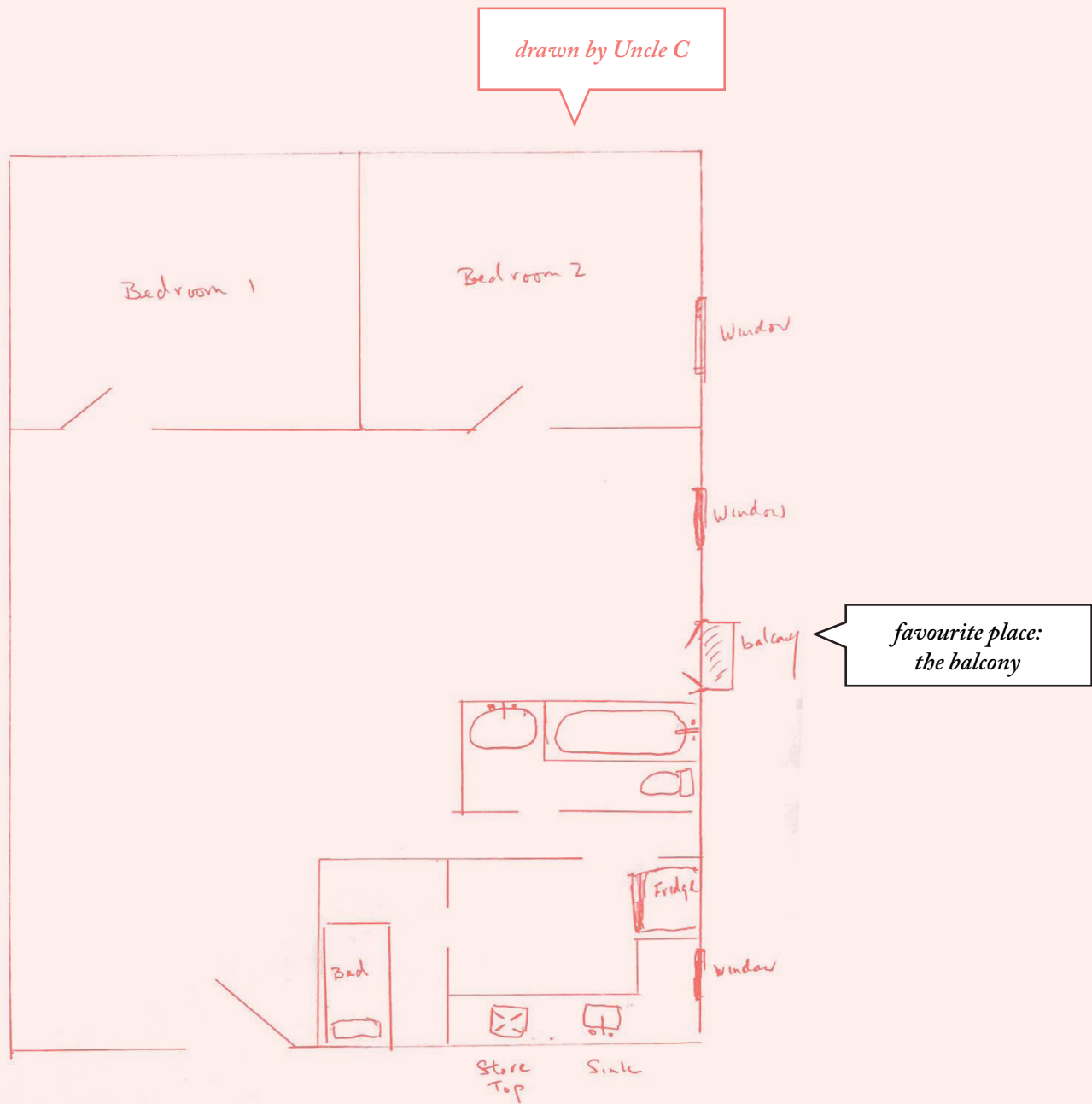


Fig. C.7 *Home in Happy Valley*, image by Uncle C.

Just like with Aunty B, Uncle C's plan drawing seemed more successful than my sketches.

On sitelessness

I am mystified by Uncle C's home in Hong Kong. He doesn't remember an exact address, so I hunt for a suitable location with the clues I have from our conversation: it's on Wong Nai Chung Road; approximately 25 storeys tall; has a streetcar station just outside the entrance; and from the balcony, you can see the Happy Valley Racetrack. The apartment eludes me. I can't find anything that tall surrounding the racetrack in historic aerial photos of the area, and historic plans for buildings on the street during the 1970s don't seem to line up with the four-unit-per-floor makeup of the building he describes. In one photograph, Uncle C identifies a building that could be in the right location, if only it were taller. But he's not sure. It was a long time ago, and he was too young to remember. I desperately want to site this building, but I'm conflicted about which facts should hold weight. What authority do I have to decide?

Without finding reference in historic databases, I return to Uncle C's drawing. It now holds sole authority over the realities we draw out. Rather than using its information to flesh out a scaled plan, we build from the lines he sketched. The perspectives I draw from his plan are likely unrecognizable from his memory, but carry details from his description like the wood parquet floors and the French doors leading to the balcony. I string them together to draw the room. What we create together is a hybrid space at the convergence of his memory and my imagination, partly a reconstruction of memory and partly a fictional space.

Home is not bounded by reality.

**Lai see* are small red envelopes containing money which are exchanged between family, friends, and co-workers during the Lunar New Year. They're meant to bring good fortune. When you receive an envelope you're supposed to say *kung hei fat choy* which translates roughly to "I hope you get rich."

Did you do anything special for Lunar New Year?

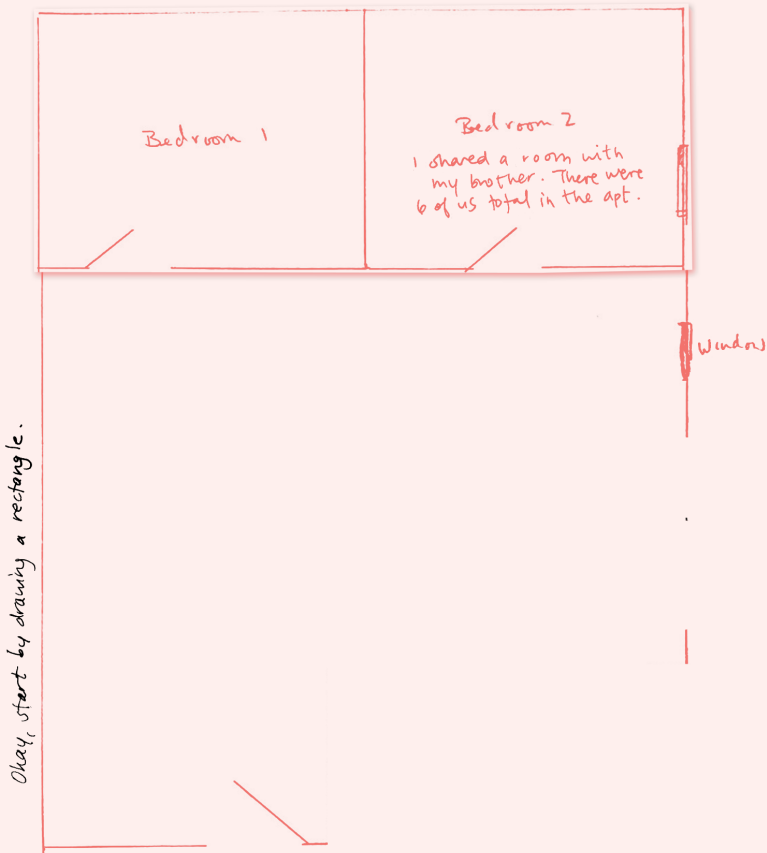
Oh yeah, we would go visit the aunts and uncles and get lots of *lai see*.*

That's the best part!

It's a little bit different here than it was in Hong Kong. You have so much more food and different kinds of celebrations. You have line dance constantly, there's food everywhere you go. Nowadays we try to follow tradition a little bit, we go out to eat and give *lai see*. But in Hong Kong we had so many more relatives, so it would be a whole week celebration. In Canada it's just a day or two.

we weren't allowed to bring anything when we came over, just our own clothes.

I did bring some comics though, called Lo Fu Jie. It's about an old guy and a fat guy.



Bed room 2
I shared a room with my brother. There were 6 of us total in the apt.

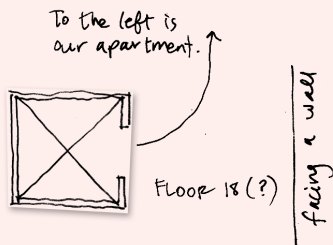
Window

Okay, start by drawing a rectangle.

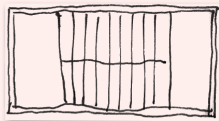


we used to stand out here and watch the horses race at the Happy Valley Racecourse - you could see it from the balcony.
we didn't dry our laundry here. We just came to watch.

(It's not good to go there though, you'll lose all your money).



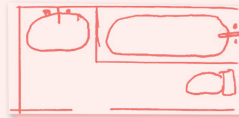
STAIR?? we had no stairs.



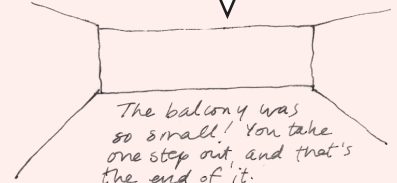
I don't know where the stairs were. I guess I should....

where are the STAIRS?

- I MISS THE FOOD!



drawn by Natalie



The balcony was so small! You take one step out, and that's the end of it.

The maid sleeps here. You go through the kitchen to get to her room. She's from a small village past Repulse Bay.

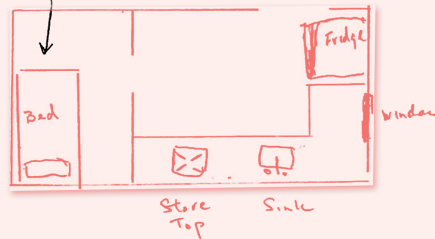


Fig. C.8 Deconstructed plan of home in Happy Valley, image by Uncle C and author.

I tried pulling apart the plan to look at things from another perspective.

What else did you do for special occasions?

We used to go to *Chek Chue*. I forget the English name for it, it's right after Repulse Bay. We had a cottage, sort of. That's what we called it. It was a little apartment building. We went there on the weekends sometimes and that's what we did for holidays.

Whoa, okay. How did the cottage compare to your condo?

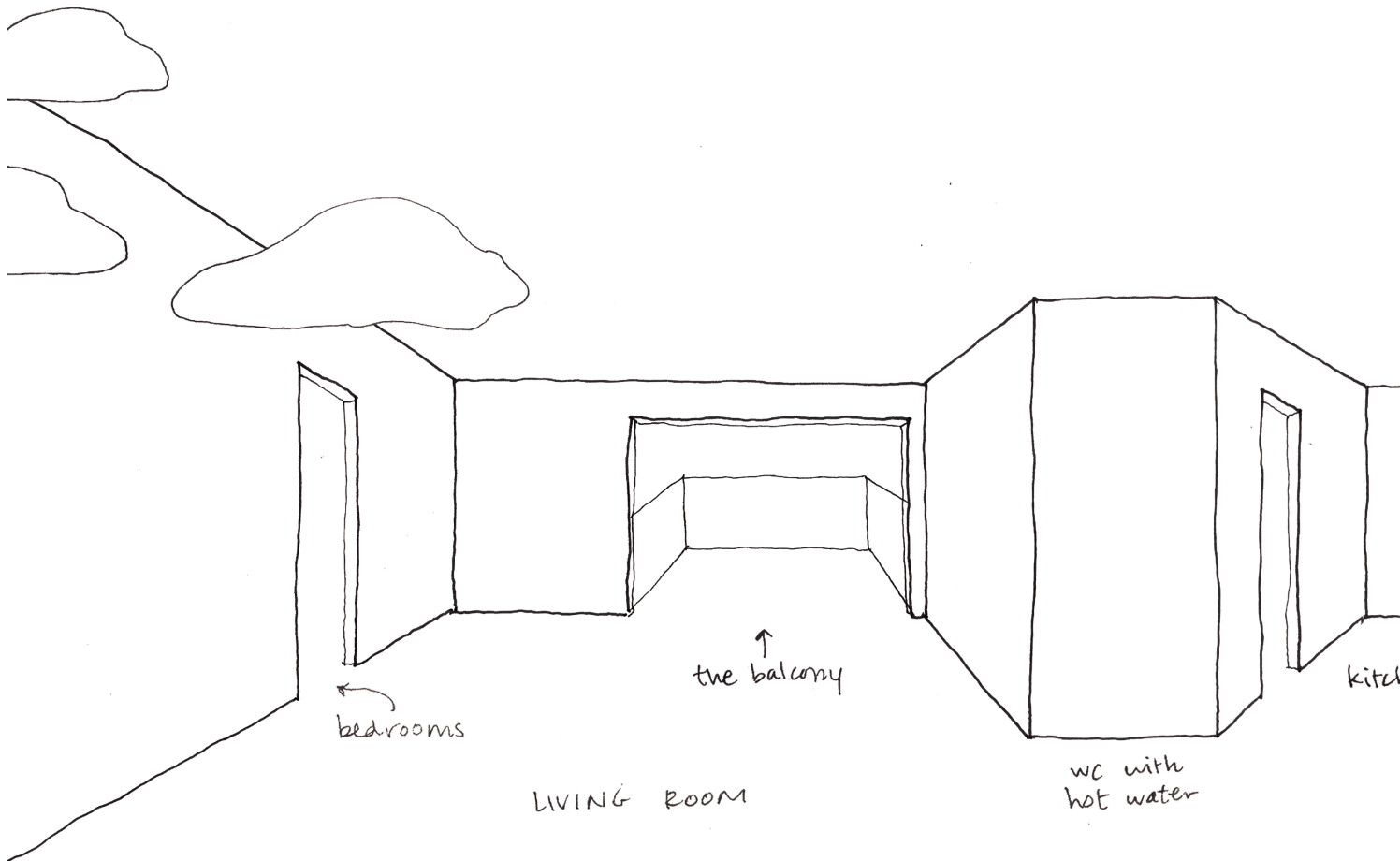
It was a three storey apartment, we were on the third floor. It's away from the city. I think it was even bigger than our condo. I can't remember, but I know it was right next to a police station. You could go down to the beach and stuff, it was by the water.



Fig. C.9 *Stanley*, Kirstin Shafer Mortiz and Frederic A. Moritz, 1979, Gwulo.

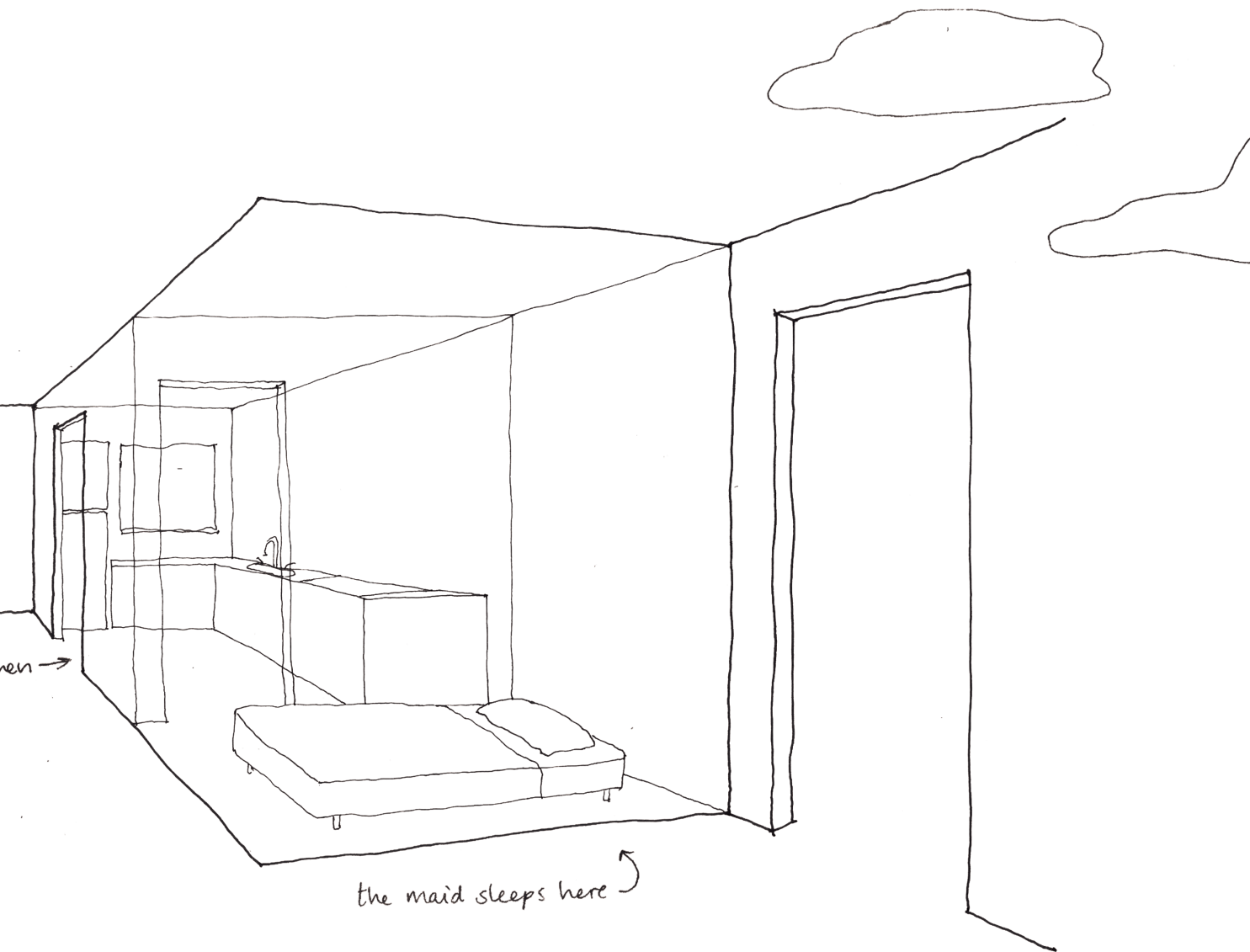
The English name for Chek Chue beach is Stanley.

I found some images and made a sketch—it seems a little empty right now though!



I think the balcony is drawn too wide, it was pretty small with heavy French style doors. The balcony was concrete, and the floor inside was wood parquet—yes, it was very 70s.

Fig. C.10 *Home in Happy Valley perspective*, image by author.



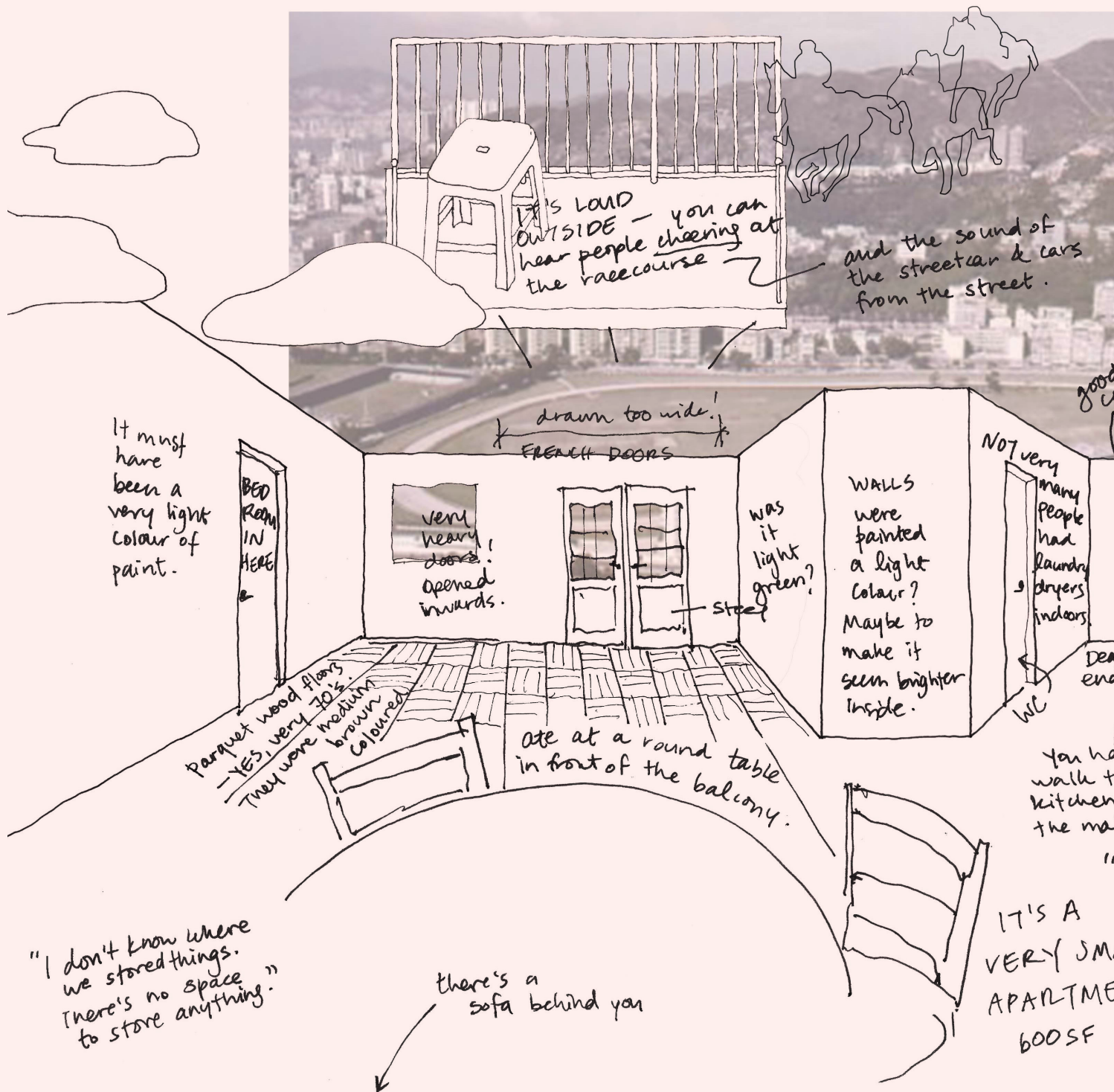


Fig. C.11 Home in Happy Valley perspective v2, image by author.

I test out an interior perspective, but it feels like this drawing comes more from my imagination than Uncle C's memory.

BUT - sometimes he'd go to Chek chue to an apartment by the water, away from the city (but next to a police station)

The road is so narrow that the double-decker buses scrape the trees on either side...

The apartment there was bigger than this one!

smells coming from the kitchen?

"She was from a small village just beyond Repulse Bay. We partitioned this room off for her."

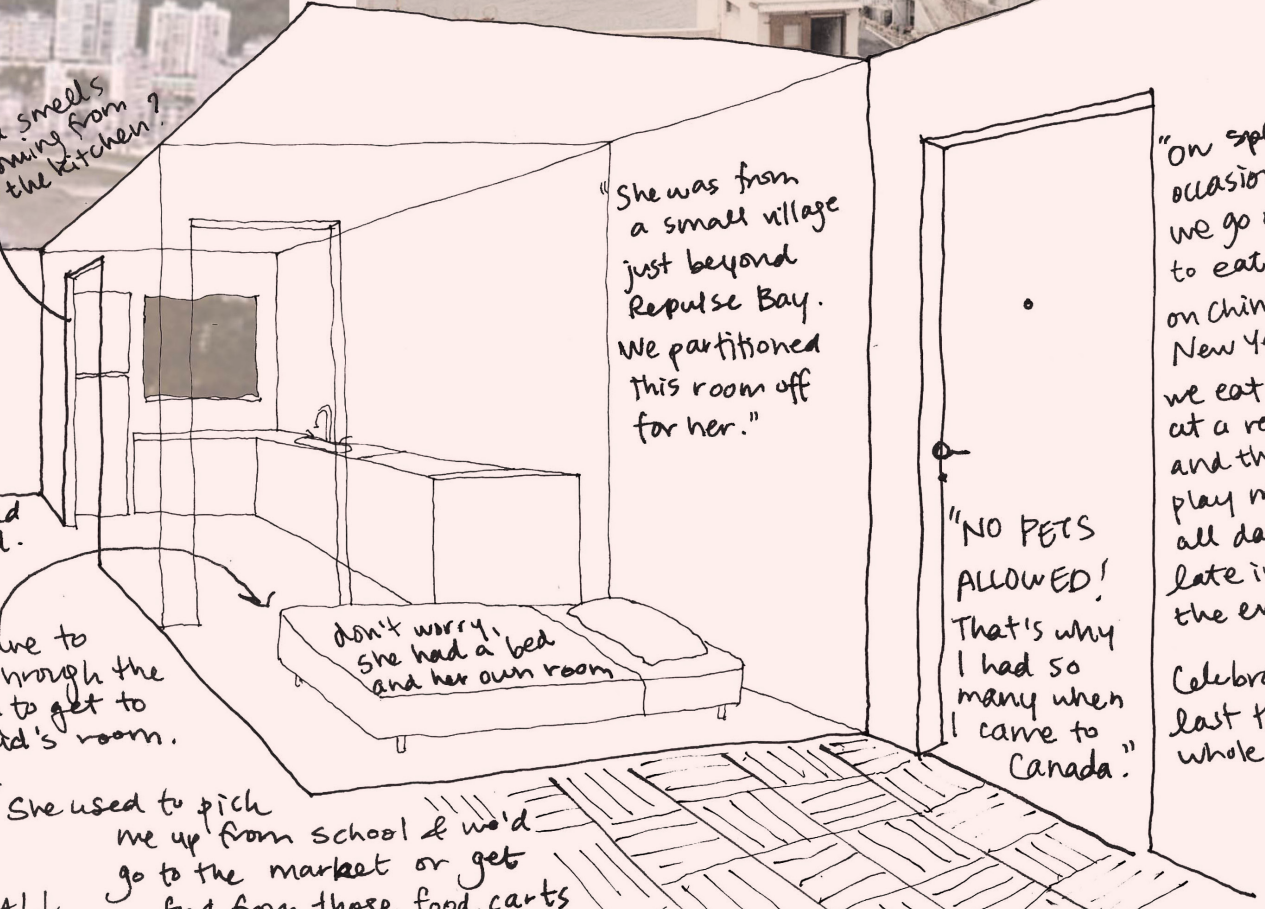
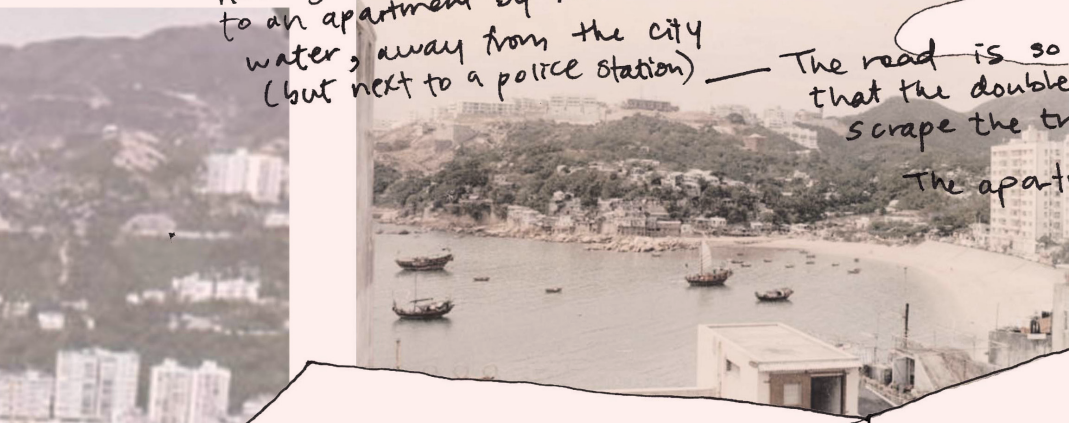
don't worry, she had a bed and her own room

"NO PETS ALLOWED! That's why I had so many when I came to Canada."

"On special occasions, we go out to eat - on Chinese New Year, we eat lunch at a restaurant and then play mah jong all day and late into the evening" Celebrations last the whole week

we to through the to get to dad's room.

ALL NT She used to pick me up from school & we'd go to the market or get food from those food carts in the streets - they sold dumplings, fish balls, all kinds of things. And it was very inexpensive."



On sites of interest

It takes me a while to find *Chek Chue* online, because its English name is completely different: Stanley, as in Lord Stanley, the British Colonial Secretary in 1842 when Hong Kong was ceded to the British. In Cantonese, *Chek Chue* translates to “red column,” thought to either relate to the red blossoms of trees that grew on the peninsula, or to infamous 18th-century pirates who terrorized the area. There are clear differences between the Chinese and British experience of the same city, who refer to the same places in the city using names with vastly different historical meanings.

A few times now that I’ve searched for places in Hong Kong, the internet takes me to Great Britain, Canada, or the United States of America. It’s jarring because I know what Dundas Street in Toronto looks like and it’s very different from the Dundas Street in Hong Kong. The British colonial frameworks which underscore Hong Kong’s urban fabric do the same in Canada.

When Uncle C mentions a second apartment connected to his experience of home, I search for traces of it with renewed energy. If I’m unable to find his home overlooking the racetrack, maybe I can find this one. I spend some time searching through plans of *Chek Chue* and find the old police station; however, historic photos of it don’t spark Uncle C’s memory. He tells me that the police station he remembers might have been a jail house instead. Despite being unable to locate either home within historic databases, I’ve gained a general feeling of place: for Uncle C, it seems like a significant part of living in Hong Kong was outside of the apartment itself. What could he see from the balcony? Where did he go out to eat for Lunar New Year? Where did they travel on the weekends?

Home is vast, stretching beyond the walls of a single building.

2022

Scarborough
Ontario, Canada

So, where do you spend time in your current house?

We like watching TV a lot.

Is that in the living room?

There's a TV in almost every room. Our bedroom, our son's bedroom, the living room, and basement. And he's using the third bedroom as his office. And then when I go to sleep I watch the news and stuff.

Do you ever watch the Hong Kong news?

No, I try not to. I know there's a lot of stuff going on recently because at work, most of them are from Hong Kong. And they always talk about how it is over there now. Yeah, so I don't want to watch it at home, I hear enough about it at work.

almost
- bungalow.

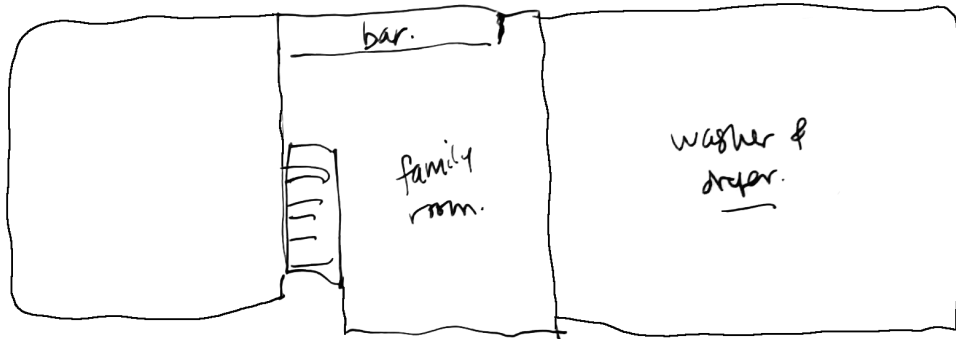


Fig. C.12 Scarborough home process work, image by author.

Again, I cannot keep up with Uncle C's description during our conversation.

Did you bring any objects with you to Canada from Hong Kong?

We weren't allowed to bring much stuff, mostly clothes. We each had a suitcase and a little backpack carry on.

Did you collect anything, like stamps for example?

What did I collect in Hong Kong? Comics. It's called *Lo Fu Ji*. It's about this old guy, a short fat guy. I can't really remember too much. But I know I collected those and I did bring some over.

So I guess you had a lot of relatives in Hong Kong. Did know a lot of people in Canada when you first came here?

Not really, we had [a few relatives in Hamilton and

Ottawa] that we stayed with at first. Then we came down to Toronto because my parents thought it was too cold in Ottawa.

Ottawa is definitely a lot colder than Toronto. So you were going to school in Toronto then, what was that like?

That was hard. In the first year I hardly made any friends in Toronto because they were very prejudiced. We just sort of kept to ourselves, and they had to pick on someone, right?

That must have been difficult.

Yeah, that's why after the first year I changed schools. It got a bit better because it was a better neighbourhood, so I made some friends.

Do you have a backyard in your current house? And do you spend a lot of time there?

No no. Not at all. Well, we have a patio but the only time I'm out in the backyard is to cut the grass. Or to barbecue. The patio is about 8 by 10 feet.

What can you see from the patio?

Tall trees. And our neighbour's yard on the left and right sides. And then there's trees at the back that are about 20 feet tall, so I can't see the people behind there.

Okay, so a very different view from your house in Hong Kong.

Yeah.



Fig. C.13 Kitchen, image by Uncle C.

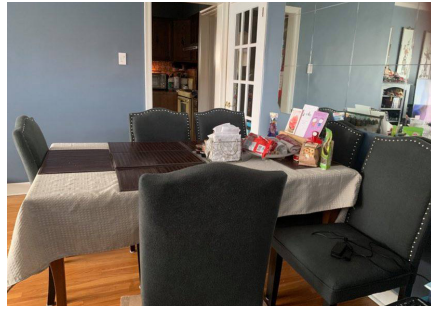


Fig. C.14 Dining, image by Uncle C.

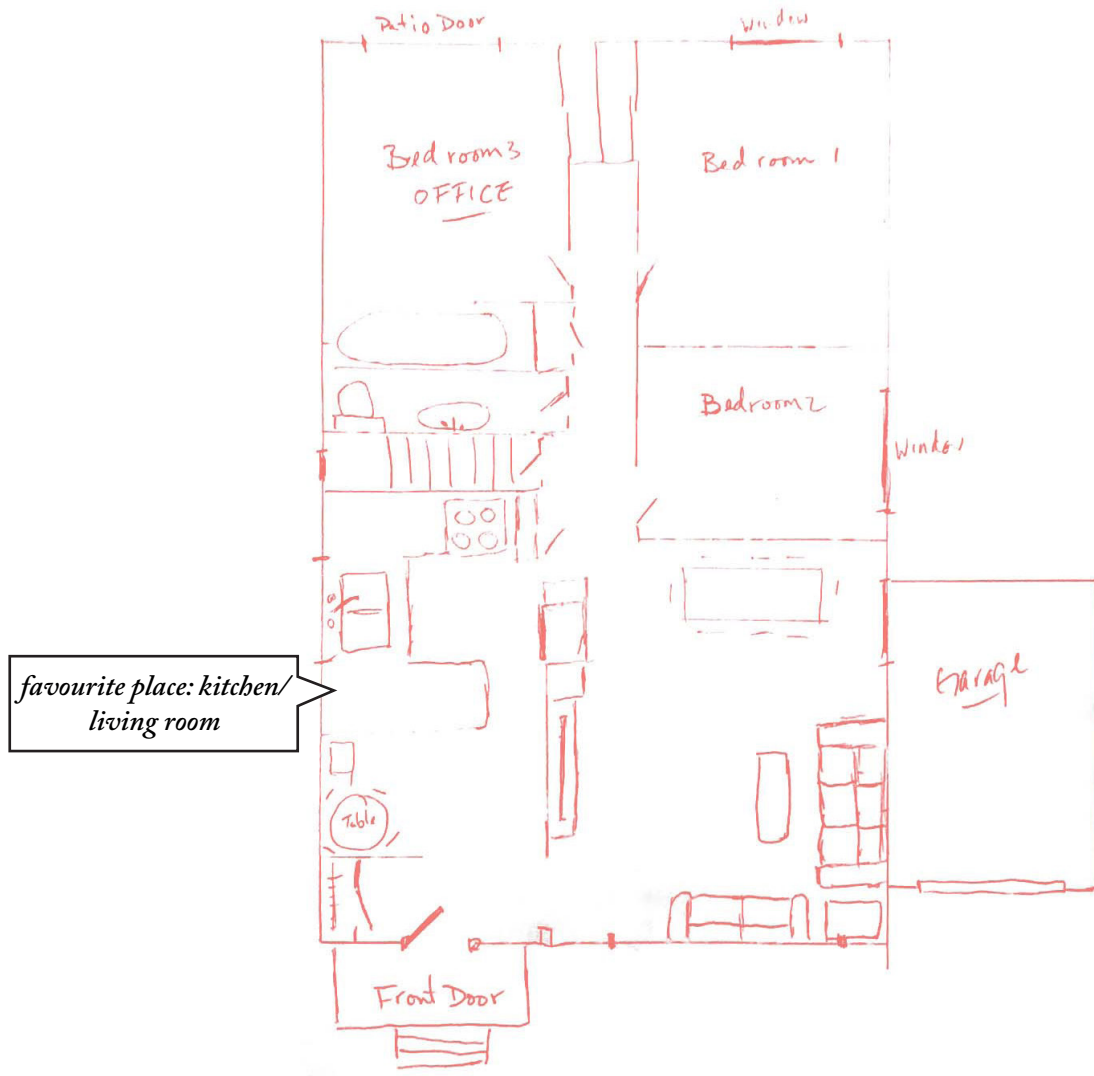


Fig. C.15 Home in Scarborough, image by Uncle C.

His sketch looks very different from mine.

Is there anything that you would change about your current house?

Well, half the basement is unfinished. Maybe an extra washroom or a bedroom there. Nobody really goes downstairs unless it's to wash clothes.

What if it was like a movie watching space? You could use a projector and watch on the whole wall.

Yes, we could do that, but I still don't think they would go downstairs. I don't know how come nobody ever goes downstairs anymore, maybe it's just too many stairs.



Fig. C.16 *Basement in Scarborough*, images by Uncle C.

“As promised, pictures of our messy basement.”

Okay, let me know how close I am with this basement plan - I feel like I'm missing some walls near the stair? And I guessed where some windows might be.

Wow, that is exactly what it looks like, except one more window to the right of laundry area.

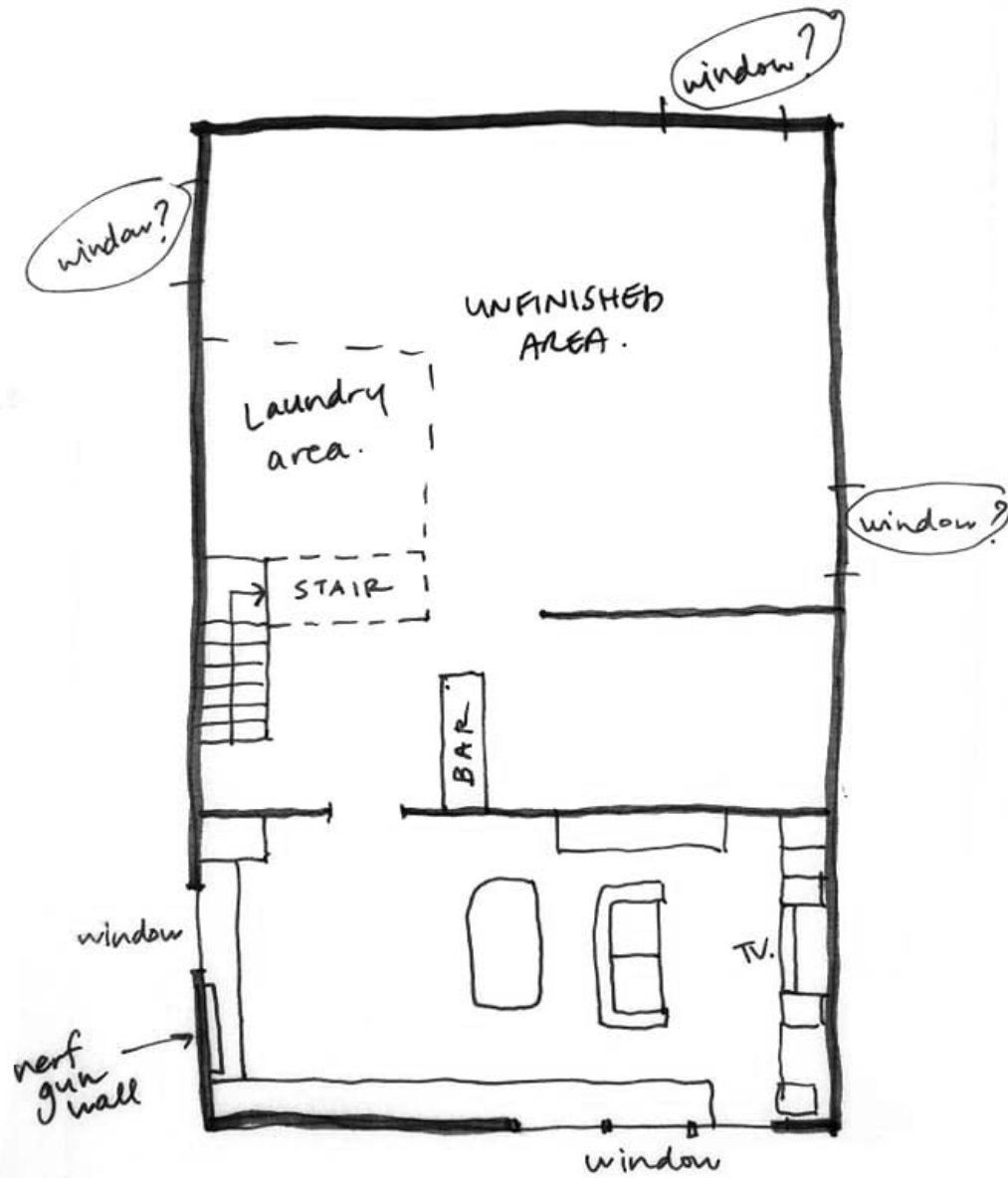


Fig. C.17 *Scarborough basement plan v1*, image by author.

Uncle C didn't include a basement plan in the drawings he made of his home.

Okay awesome, thanks!

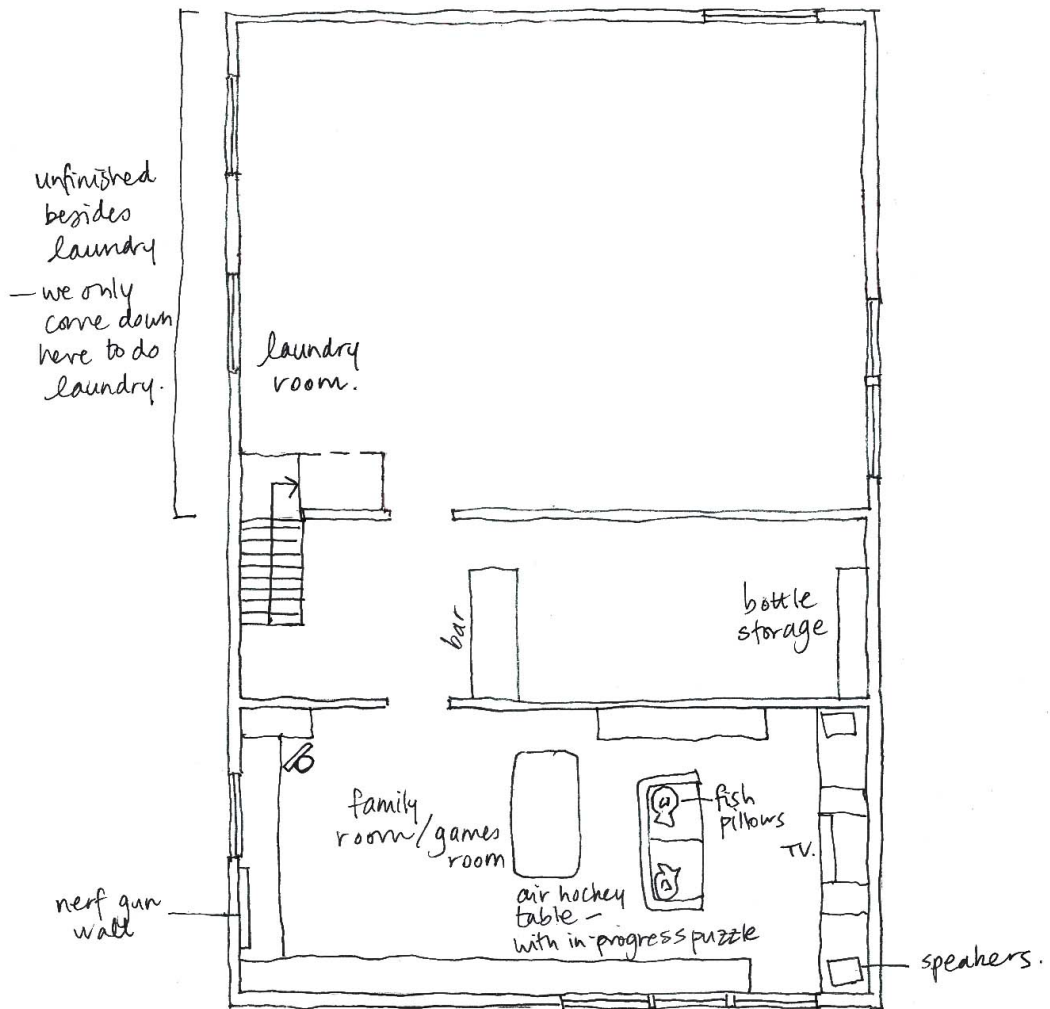


Fig. C.18 Scarborough basement plan v2, image by author.

I draw an existing sketch and send it to Uncle C.

Okay, here is crazy idea number one, with unlimited imaginary budget, of course: we'll put Chek Chue beach in the basement.

A pool might be too small.
How about a hot tub and
sauna?

Ooh yeah, sounds good!

Maybe a second washroom too.

You got it.

Thanks, you are so kind.

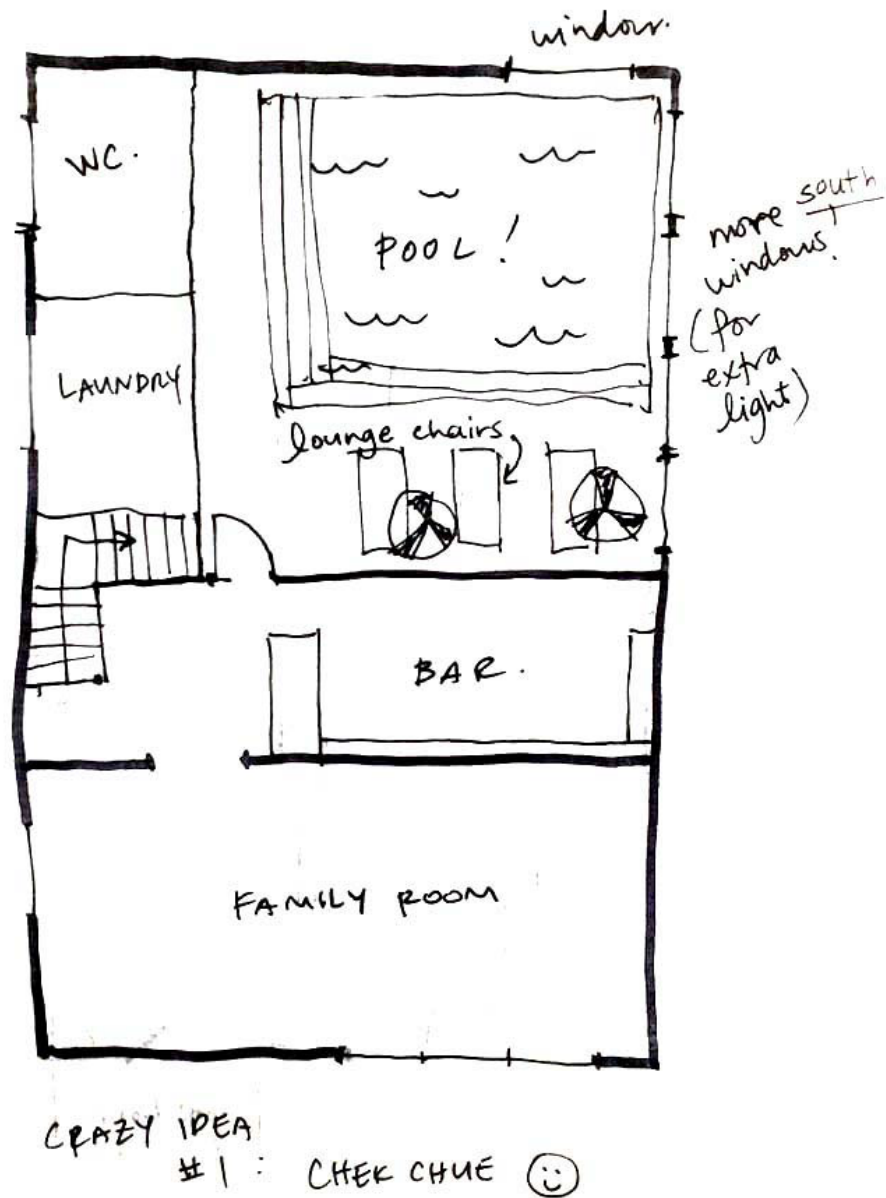
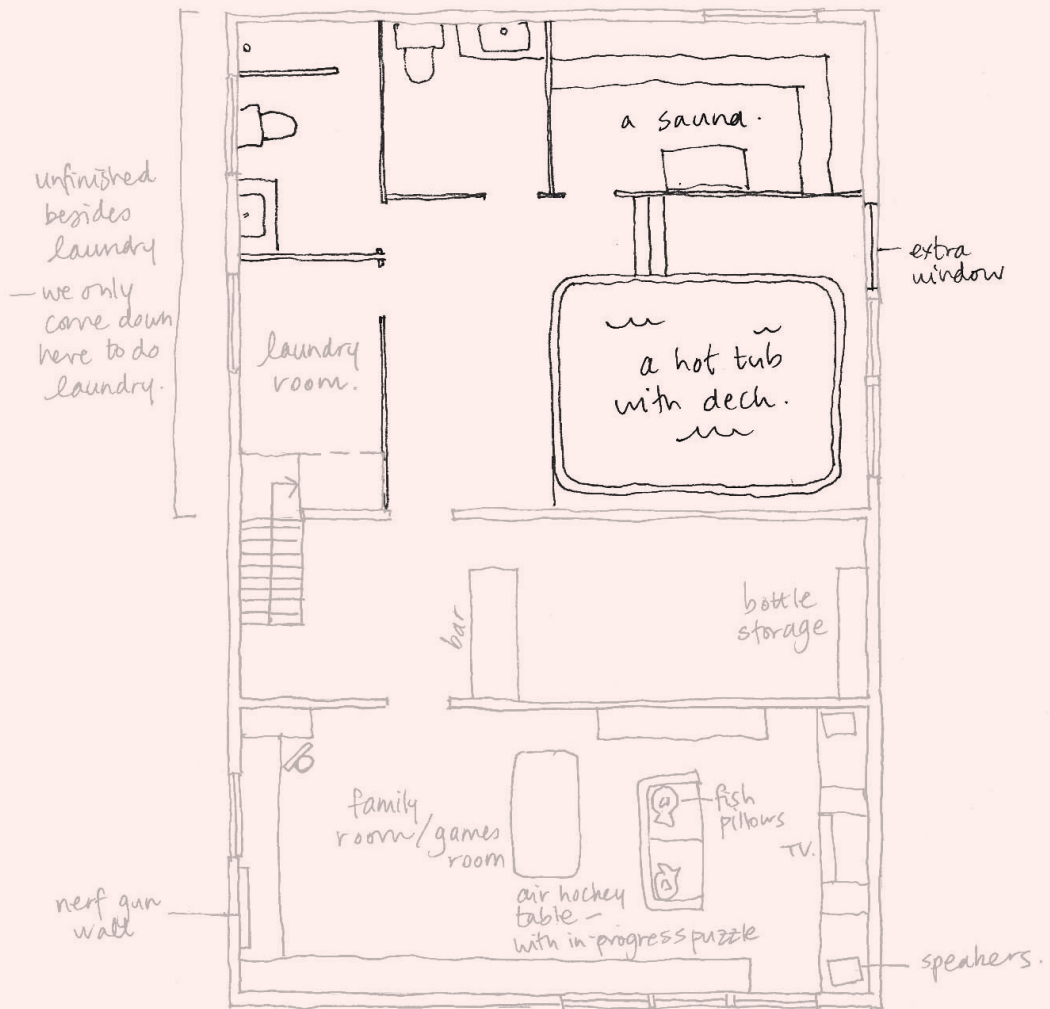


Fig. C.19 Scarborough basement plan v3, image by author.

Here is my latest plan - and a crazy perspective! With some creative interpretation...



THE BASEMENT

Fig. C.20 Scarborough basement plan v4, image by author.

Very nice, love it. You can be my interior designer anytime.



Fig. C.21 *Basement beach proposal*, image by author.

A beach in the basement.

WELCOME TO
CHEK CHUE, SCARBOROUGH



"Okay, here is crazy idea number one:
we'll put Chek Chue beach in the basement"

"How about a hot tub and
a sauna?"

"You got it."

We don't really use the
basement a lot. This
part is unfinished.

On introverted architecture

11 Alison L. Bain, *Creative Margins: Cultural Production in Canadian Suburbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.3138/j.ctt5hjwr7>.

Uncle C collected *Lo Fu Jie* comic books. It's a satirical comic popularized in 1960s Hong Kong, based around a character called Master Q who navigates everyday life in the British colony, from language barriers between English and Chinese to current political events. We don't talk much about other objects, but I feel that our conversation gravitates towards forms of entertainment—although it seems like most of the entertainment in Uncle C's current house is internal. He jokes that he has a TV in almost every room, and often spends time watching together with his wife.

This seems like a typical description of a North American suburban home. The suburb, as a place on the fringes of the city, is something of an island—a suburban home is introverted and looks inward for self-sufficiency.¹¹ Because Scarborough is what Lozanovska would describe as an “ethnoburb” and the site of the first Chinese malls in the GTA, I ask if Uncle C spends much time in the mall or in the neighbourhood; he tells me that if he wants to go out to eat, the best food is in Markham. The way he describes his current home is suburban, similar to that of his past home, jumping between islands of interest as if driving there by car.

Uncle C wanted to make changes to the unfinished basement in his house, but didn't include a plan of the basement in the drawings he sent. I get the impression that it's a separate world from his realm of inhabitation. I can see wood parquet flooring from the photographs, the same flooring he described in his childhood home, and I wonder if this is a coincidence or a liberty of memory. Our proposal brings a sense of entertainment to the unused space in Uncle C's house, similar to the sites of interest experienced in his childhood home.

Home is a suburban island.

To summarize

Uncle C's childhood home was *siteless* in that he couldn't remember the exact location of the building and I couldn't find it in historic databases that documented the area.

It seemed like *sites of interest* outside of Uncle C's childhood apartment held more significance in his memory than the apartment itself.

Uncle C's current home is something of a *suburban island* which looks inward for entertainment. Because connections to the past were not as evident compared to how Aunty A and Aunty B reminisced about their past homes, our design intervention involved putting a site of interest into the unfinished basement, to bring the outside world inside the house.

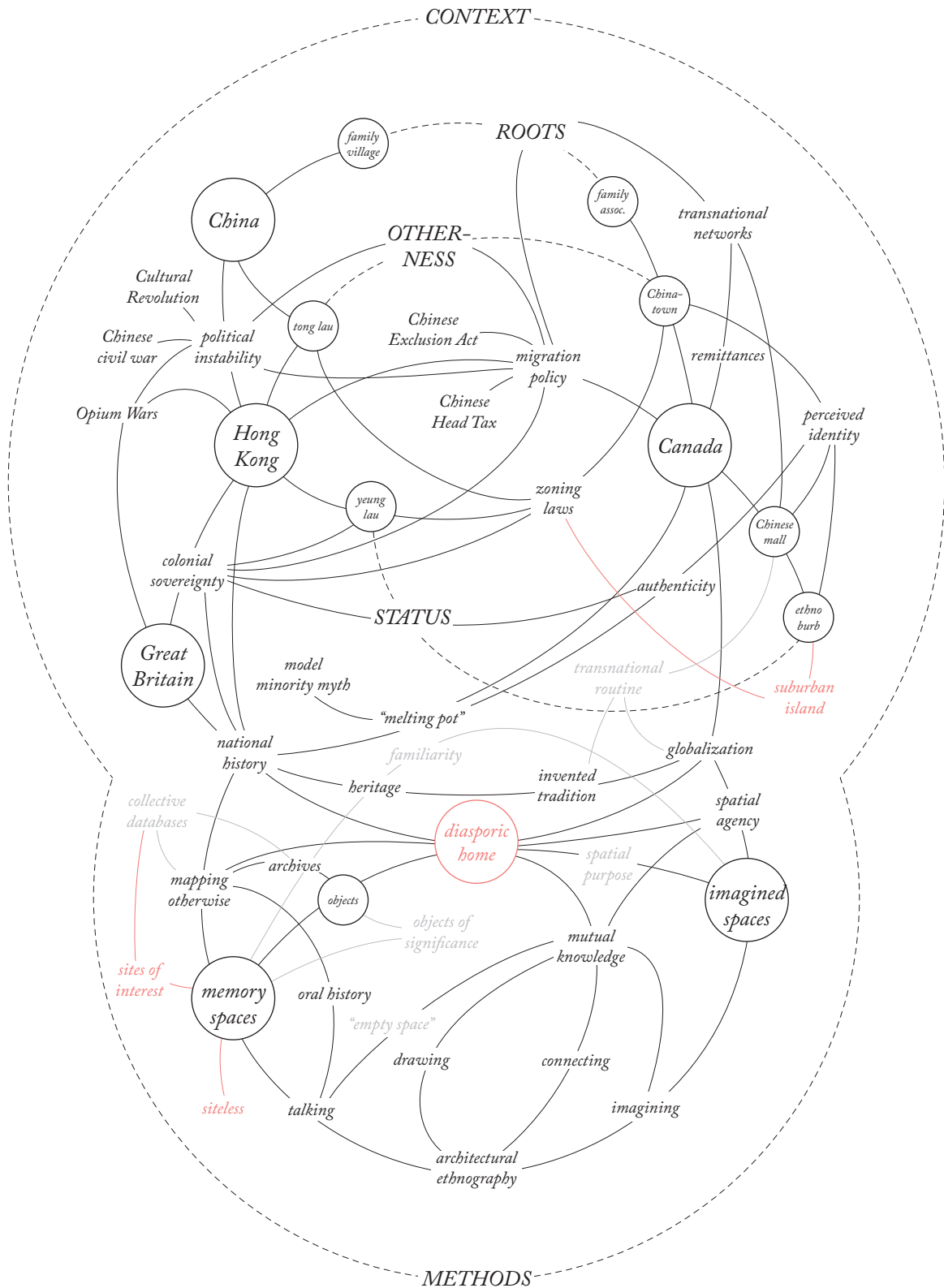


Fig. C.22 Thesis diagram, by author.

1972

In Hong Kong

*23 Junction Road
Kowloon City, Hong Kong*

Second floor unit of a 5-storey post-war tong lau

13 people (6 family members, 4 tenants)

Uncle D grew up sharing an apartment unit with 13 people. His family was not wealthy, and came to Hong Kong from mainland China as economic refugees. His family of 7 shared a total of 1100 square feet with his grandparents and two other families. He notes that their kitchen was large enough to host three kerosene gas burners, and they were lucky to have a large water storage container that became useful during the city's water shortages. Home was about survival and family.

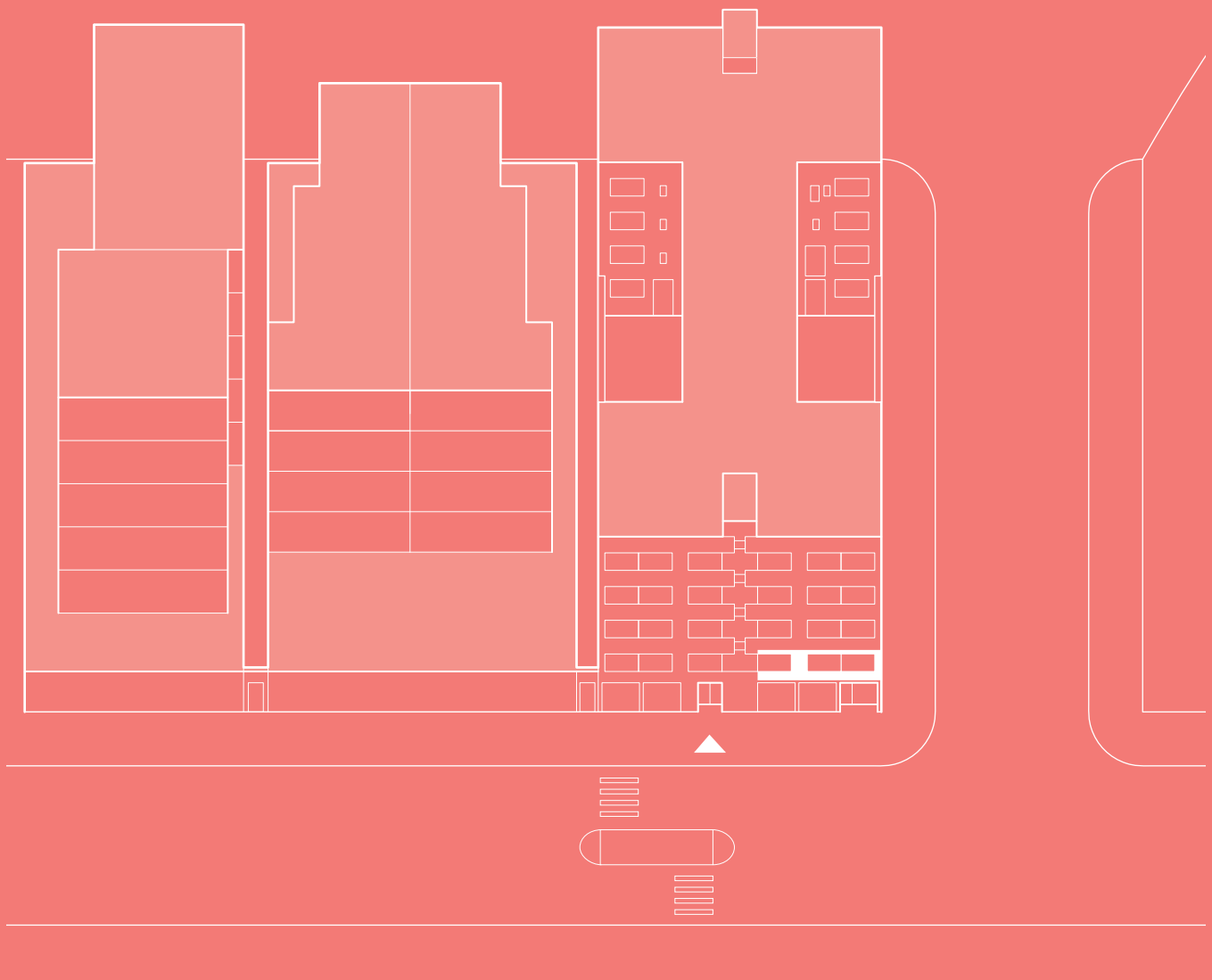


Fig. D.1 *Uncle D's home in Kowloon City*, image by author.

Uncle D currently owns a home in Canada—something he would never have been able to do in Hong Kong, where homeownership is only accessible to the elite. The main rooms he uses are the kitchen, the family room, and the bedroom. He jokes that the other rooms are “just for show,” only used when guests or family visit the house. He agrees that the house is too large for just him and his wife. However, when I asked about making changes to the house, he wanted to tear the whole thing down and build a more modern two-storey house.

*Oakville
Ontario, Canada*

Split-level house

2 people

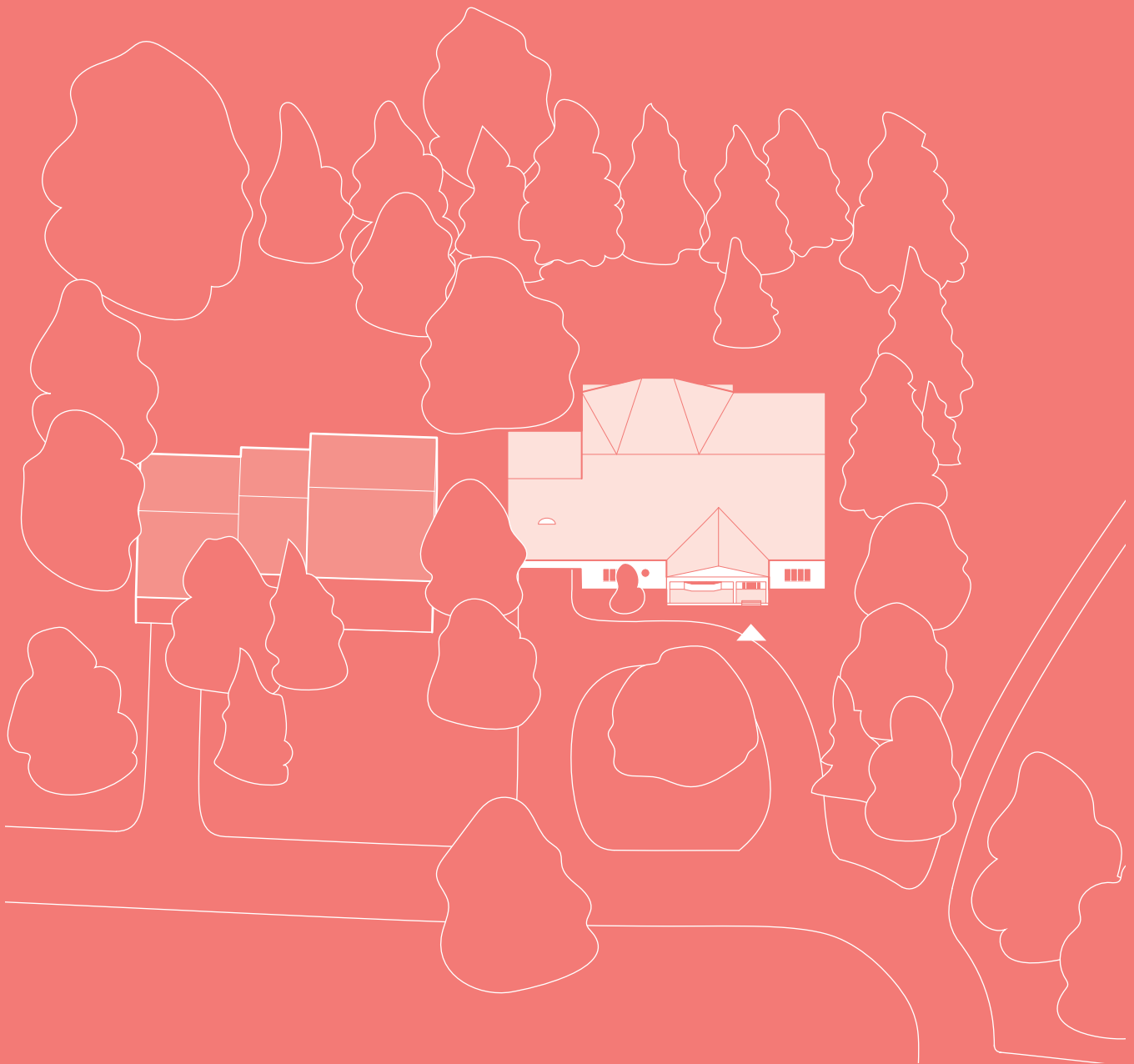


Fig. D.2 *Uncle D's home in Oakville*, image by author.

1972

23 Junction Road
Kowloon City, Hong Kong

Natalie:

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Uncle D:

Small area per capita. Sharing same apartment with others who rent a room.



Fig. D.3 *23 Junction Road*, 2019, Google maps.

The building was built in the 1950s and still exists today. When Uncle D lived here, he lived in the second floor unit on the right side of the building. The ground floor was a parking garage at the time, and currently is a piano store.

Fig. D.4 *Aerial Photograph of Kowloon Walled City from the direction of Carpenter Road (junction of Tung Tsing Road), 1967, Government Records Service Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, HKRS163-1-2537.*

Uncle D's home was within walking distance of the Kowloon Walled City. He told me that his parents did not allow him to go there due to the gang-related activity inside.

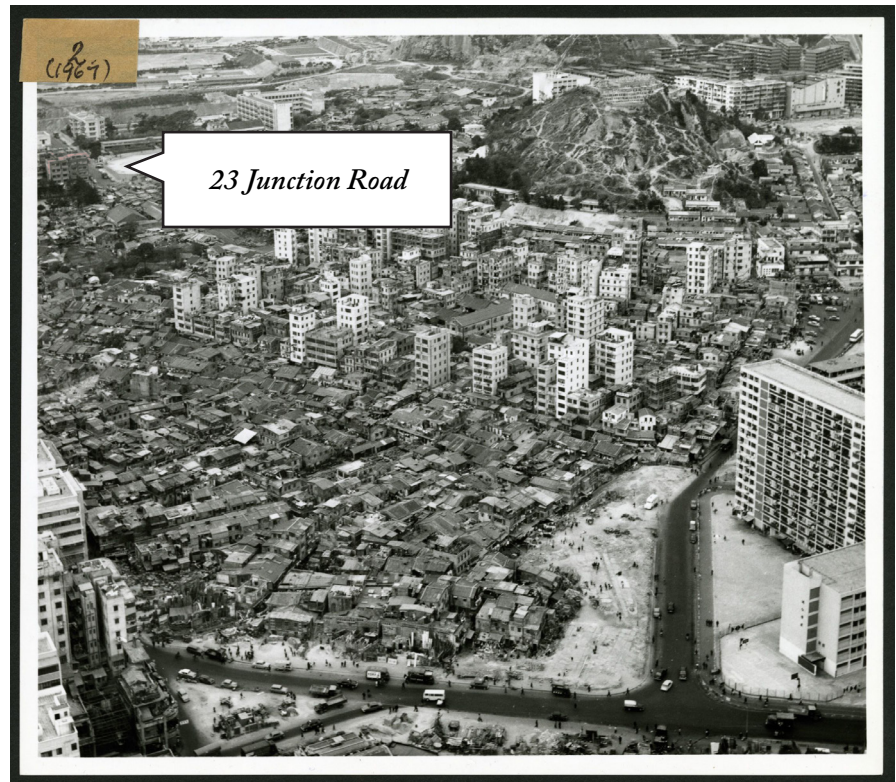




Fig. D.5 Plan of Kowloon Walled City, 1965, Government Records Service Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, HKRS163-1-2537.

How many people were living there?

13 people. I lived with our grandfather, so he used the living room for our family. Our family has seven people. The other rooms are rented out, and each room had two people. The total area was about 1100 square feet. It was a 4-storey apartment building, they couldn't build it taller because of the nearby Kai Tak airport. On the ground floor was a garage.

That's so many people! What was that like?

It was a matter of survival. I didn't hate it because I had nothing to compare with. I didn't love it, but our family was there. We have much more room here [in Canada] of course, but in general Canadian housing has

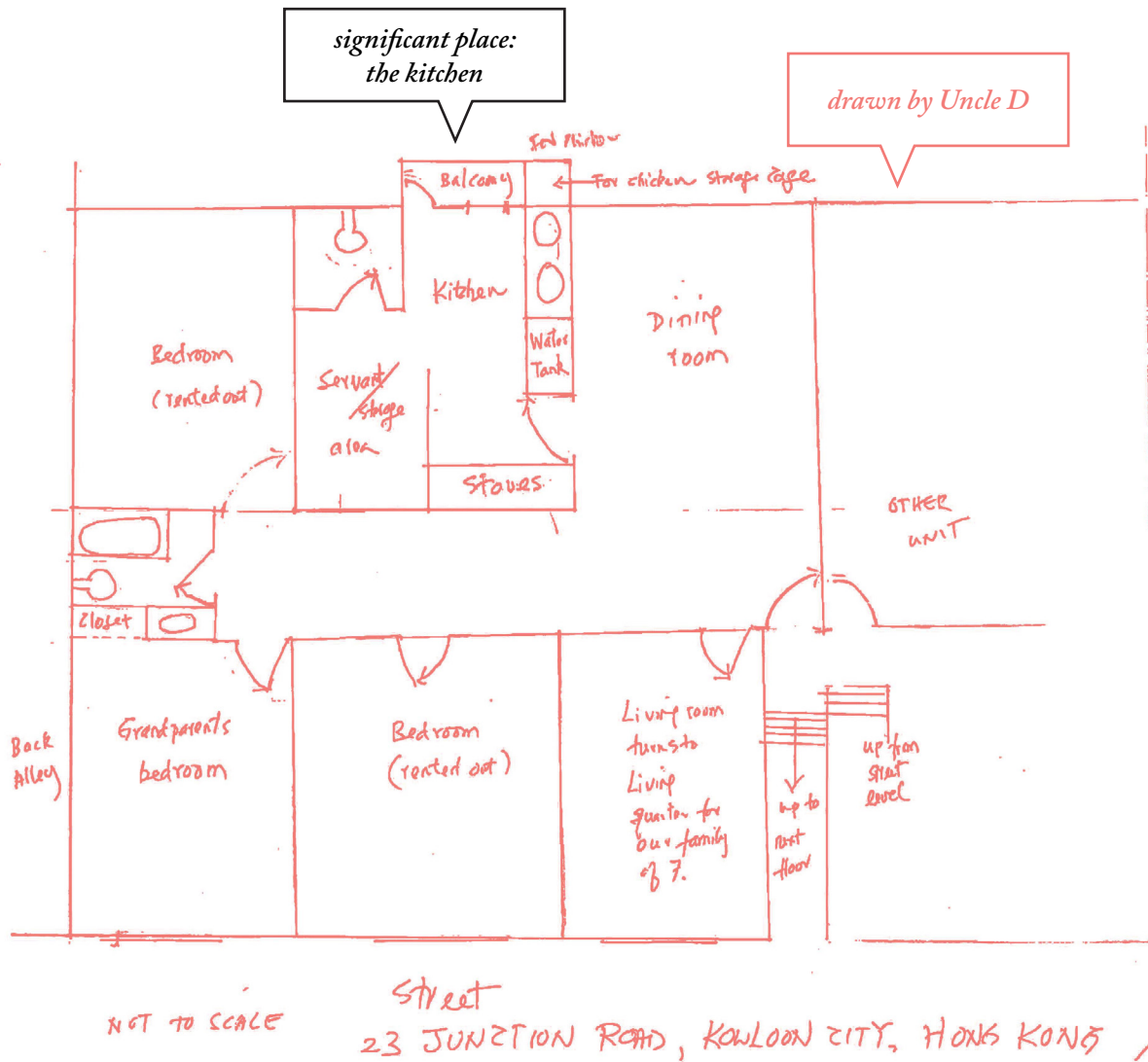


Fig. D.6 Home in Kowloon, image by Uncle D.

* Much of Hong Kong's drinking water came from freshwater rivers in mainland China. Because of the Chinese Civil War, water in 1960s Hong Kong was historically scarce and rationed between households.

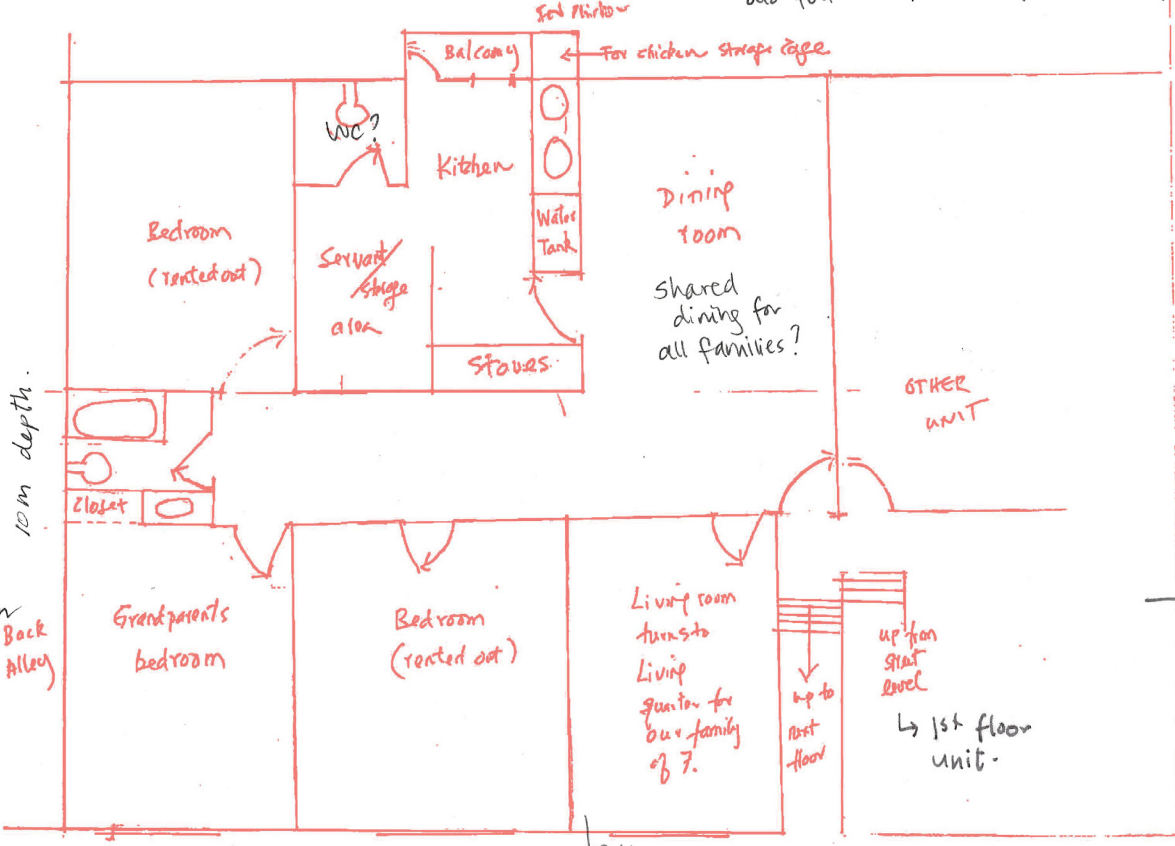
much more room. We have a basement, first floor, second floor. In Hong Kong nobody has houses except for rich people, everybody lives in apartment buildings. It's very expensive to get a house in Hong Kong.

Was there anything you specifically liked about the kitchen or house?

I guess in the kitchen, it's a rare commodity that we have a big tank for water, about four feet high. We used to store water there. And one year we had no rain.* So we were rationing with water—we had to bring pots and pans and everything and go out to the public area and get the water and put it into that big tank. So that's one convenient thing that we had. It was pretty crowded, but the cooking area was actually large.

drawn by Natalie

How does scheduling work with so many people? - what meals did you cook? - were you friends?



A: (1100ft²) ≈ 105m² between 13 people (84ft²) = 8m²/person

10m depth

Back Alley

10.5m street front.

NOT TO SCALE

Street 23 JUNCTION ROAD, KOWLOON CITY, HONG KONG

How many beds?

what was on the ground floor? PARKING

find out rough scale of building. Does it still exist?

* Next to the Kowloon Walled City.

Fig. D.7 Home in Kowloon v1, image by Uncle D and author.

I annotated the drawing with my questions to ask in our next conversation.

Who did most of the cooking?

My mum. And I helped her. I still remember that one year my mom was kind of sick so she cannot cook at all. I did all the cooking myself for the whole family for the birthday party. She taught me how to do things right, to buy the groceries and prepare things. So I learned how to cook that way.

What was your favourite meal?

Well, it's basically vegetables and meat. Chicken is most popular, and steamed fish. Stir fry is another popular dish, those are the common staples in our household.

came over from China.
 lived here since
 1956

Looking at other
 buildings & parking garage.
 What do you see? enclosed now.

stir fry veggies
 & meat Steamed fish.
 (poor children)
 common staple.

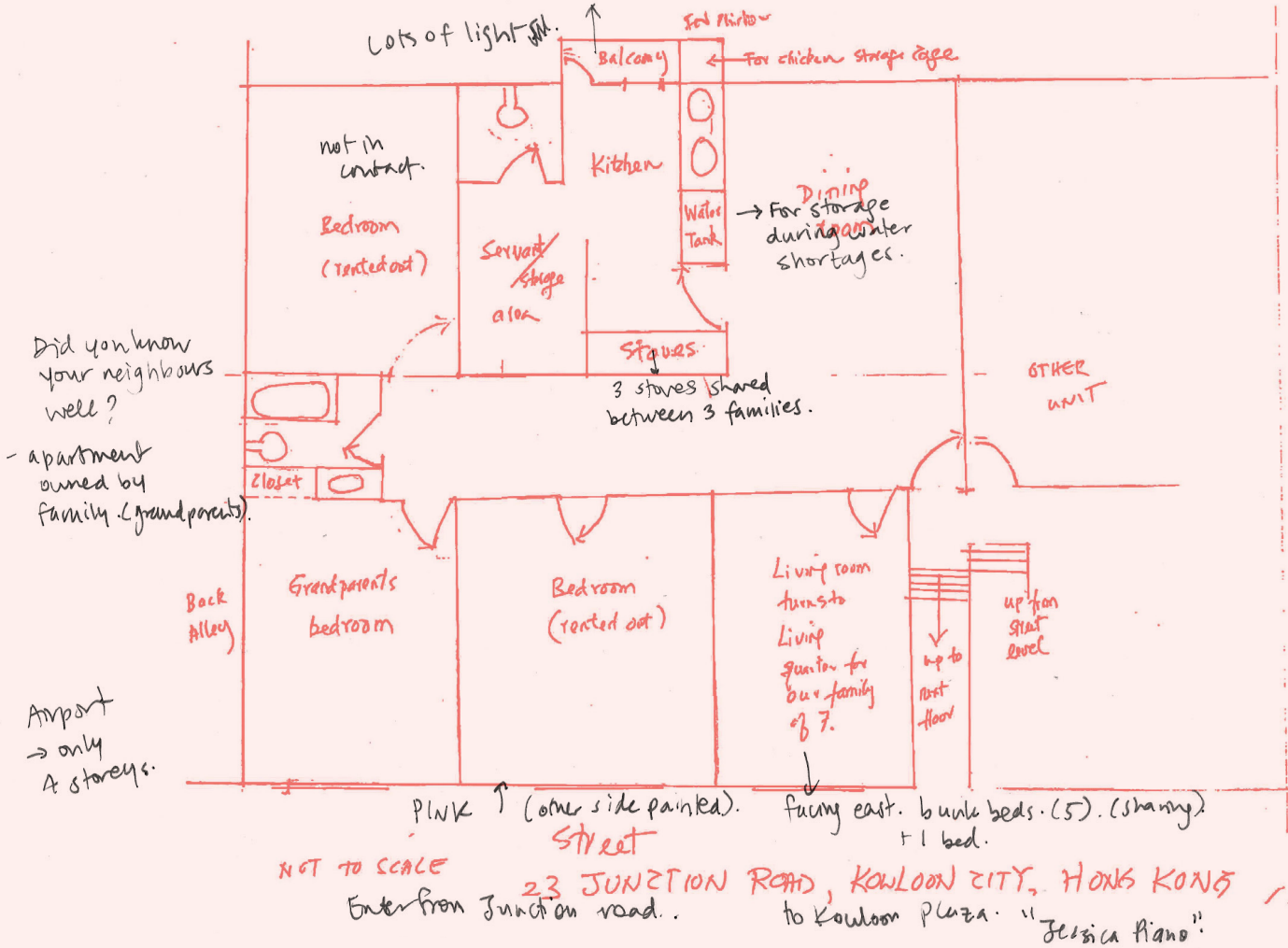


Fig. D.8 Home in Kowloon v2, image by Uncle D and author.

On density

12 See Part 1: Diasporic homes for more information.

My first conversation with Uncle D is based around survival and space. The city of Hong Kong as a home seems less permanent for him since he wasn't born there, and he didn't live there for long before moving on to Canada to pursue his education. His apartment unit was a high-density, multi-family, and intergenerational space, where his family occupied the partitioned living room.

I've been hearing about a lot of partitioning in childhood homes, and I realize that home in Hong Kong for everyone I've spoken to so far includes sharing space with people outside of immediate family relations; units are either shared between multiple families, or they house workers for room and board. This is to be expected, since we learned in the migration timeline earlier in this document that Hong Kong was a major migration port for Chinese migrants escaping political instability and famine.¹² It seems objectively obvious that anyone living in Hong Kong between 1955-1975 would either be or have someone living with them who migrated from China.

As someone who had the privilege of growing up in one place under a politically stable government with politically stable neighbouring countries, it still strikes me that the effects of migration flows were felt city-wide and regardless of economic class. There is a sense of precarity in the way Uncle D speaks about the building, and he is surprised to find that it is still standing.

Home is about survival, shared between multiple groups of people.

2022

Oakville

Ontario, Canada

Where do you spend the most time in your current house?

Probably my family room where I watch TV sometimes. We have a big kitchen too, so we spend a lot of time in the kitchen as well.

We spend time in the kitchen, family room, and also the bedroom, that's all. Let me put it this way—the other rooms are just for show. When people or when our grandkids come over, we use the dining room to accommodate them. But otherwise we seldom use the dining room and living room. We do have a big piano there so I play once in a while.

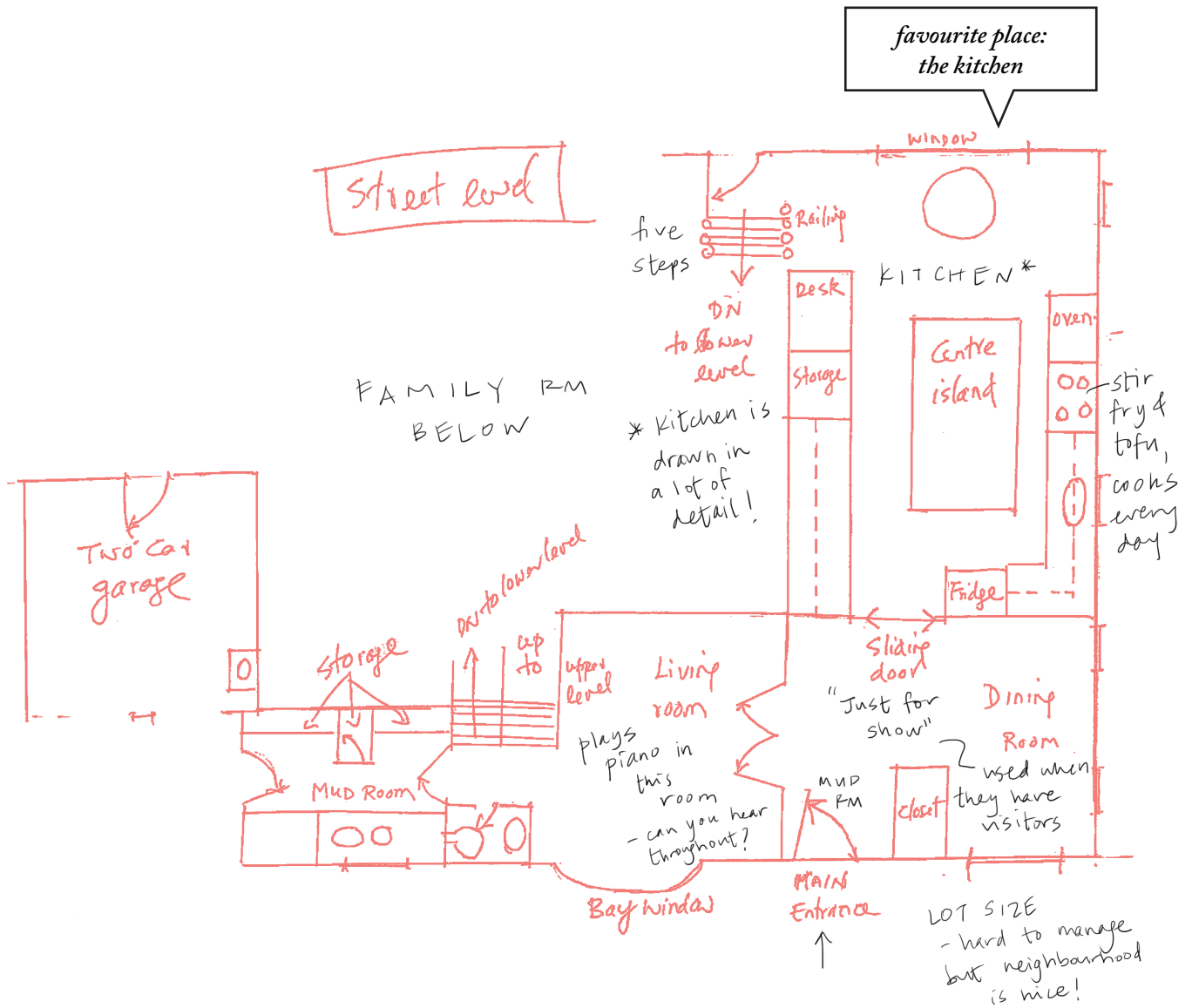


Fig. D.9 Home in Oakville ground floor, image by Uncle D and author.

Is there anything that you like or don't like about your house right now?

The thing I like about this house is this is so close to the lake and also so close to downtown. The neighbourhood is great, and we have lots of space for sure, but that's a double edged sword because there are too many spaces and we have trouble keeping up. Especially the garden and the lawn, we need some people to do the gardening and lawn. So we spend some time there, but you need to upkeep that.

And one thing I don't like is because the space is too big, that means the taxes are a lot. Yeah, \$1200 a month for tax. That's why it's almost too big.

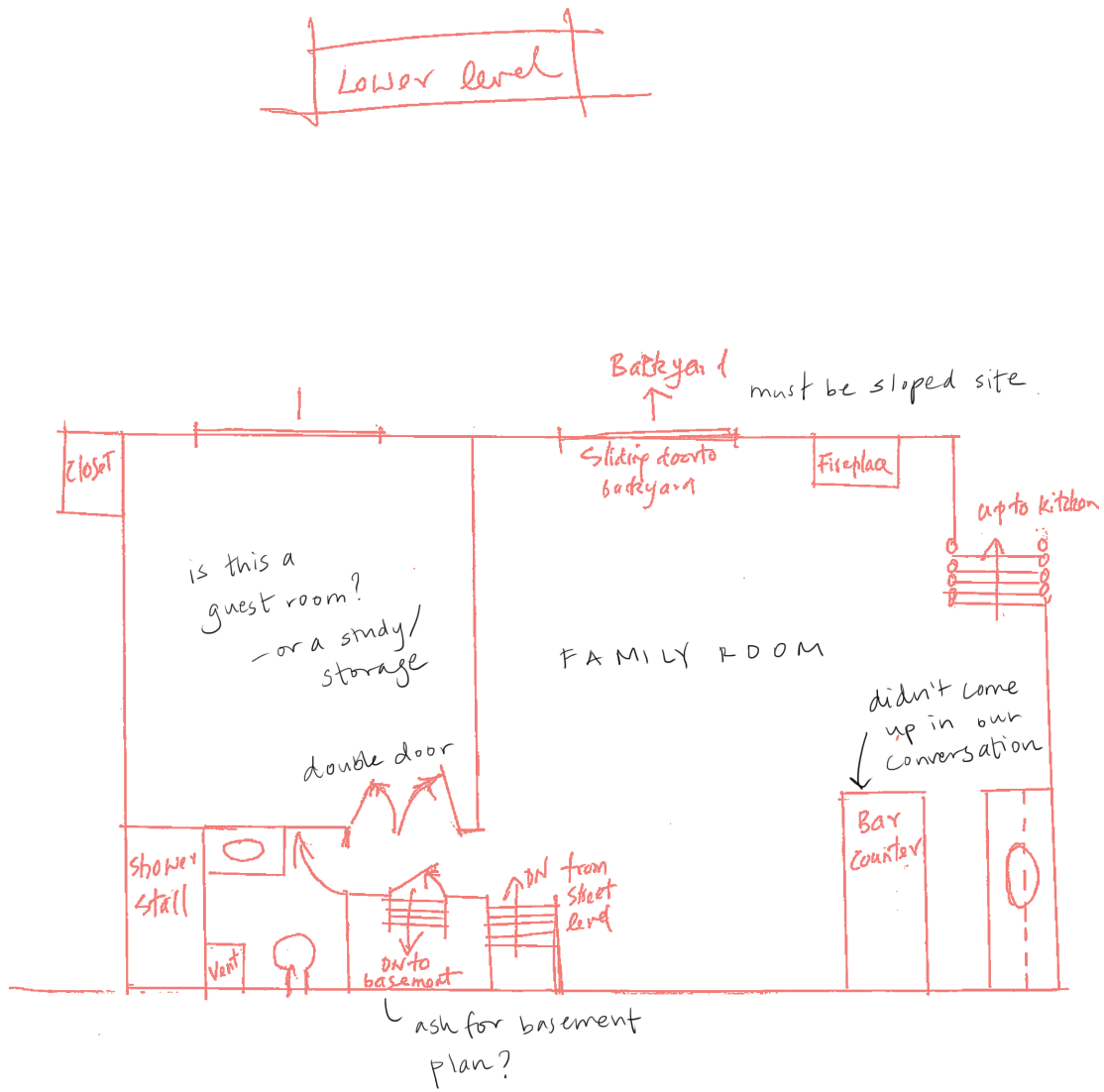


Fig. D.10 Home in Oakville lower floor, image by Uncle D and author.

There's only two of us, but we have been too lazy to move. But when we move, we can get something smaller, but they're not actually cheaper. We don't want to move to a condo apartment because it's so restrictive.

So that space I like, but I also don't like it because there's too much upkeep.

Do you have anything with you from when you lived in Hong Kong? Like, a stamp collection or comic books?

I don't think I collected anything. I didn't have any room for that, there was no space.

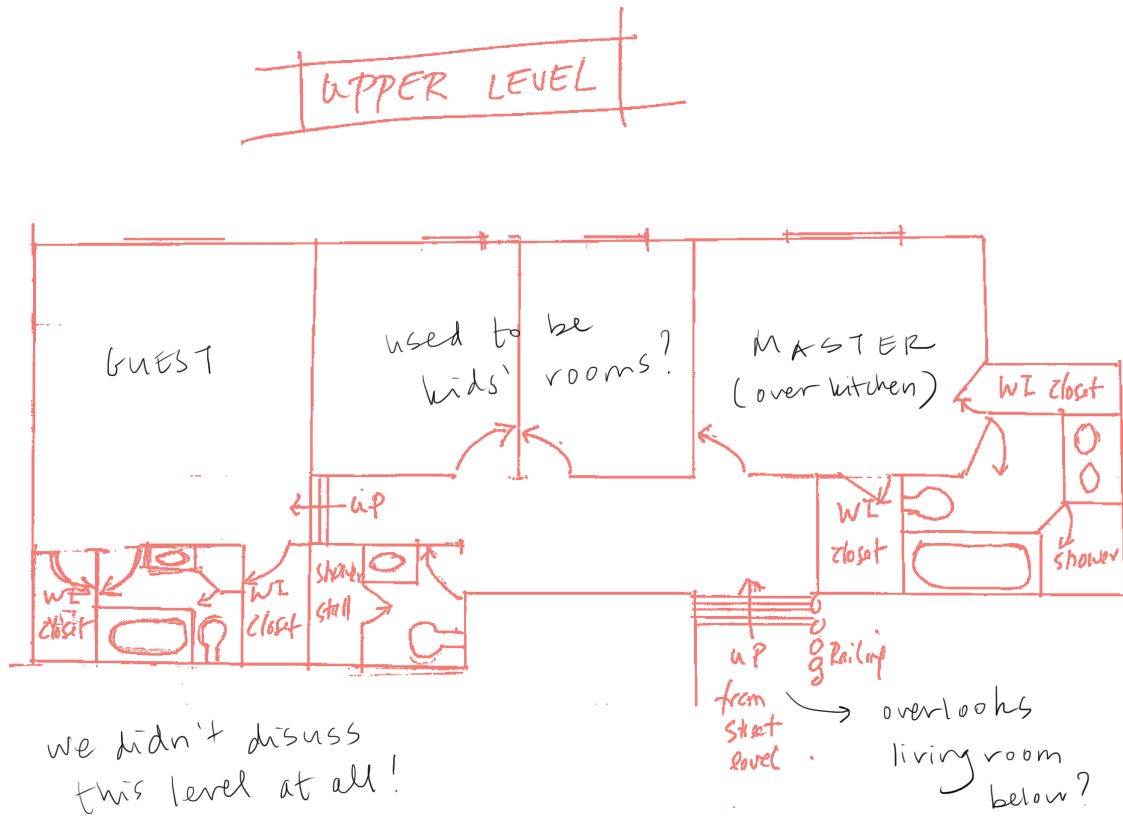


Fig. D.11 *Home in Oakville upper floor*, image by Uncle D and author.

What would you change about your house now?

If I were to make any change then I would cut it down and do a two-storey building. There's nothing wrong with this house. We're living here for 25 years already. But if I make any changes, I would just cut it down and rebuild, instead of doing a patchwork here and there.

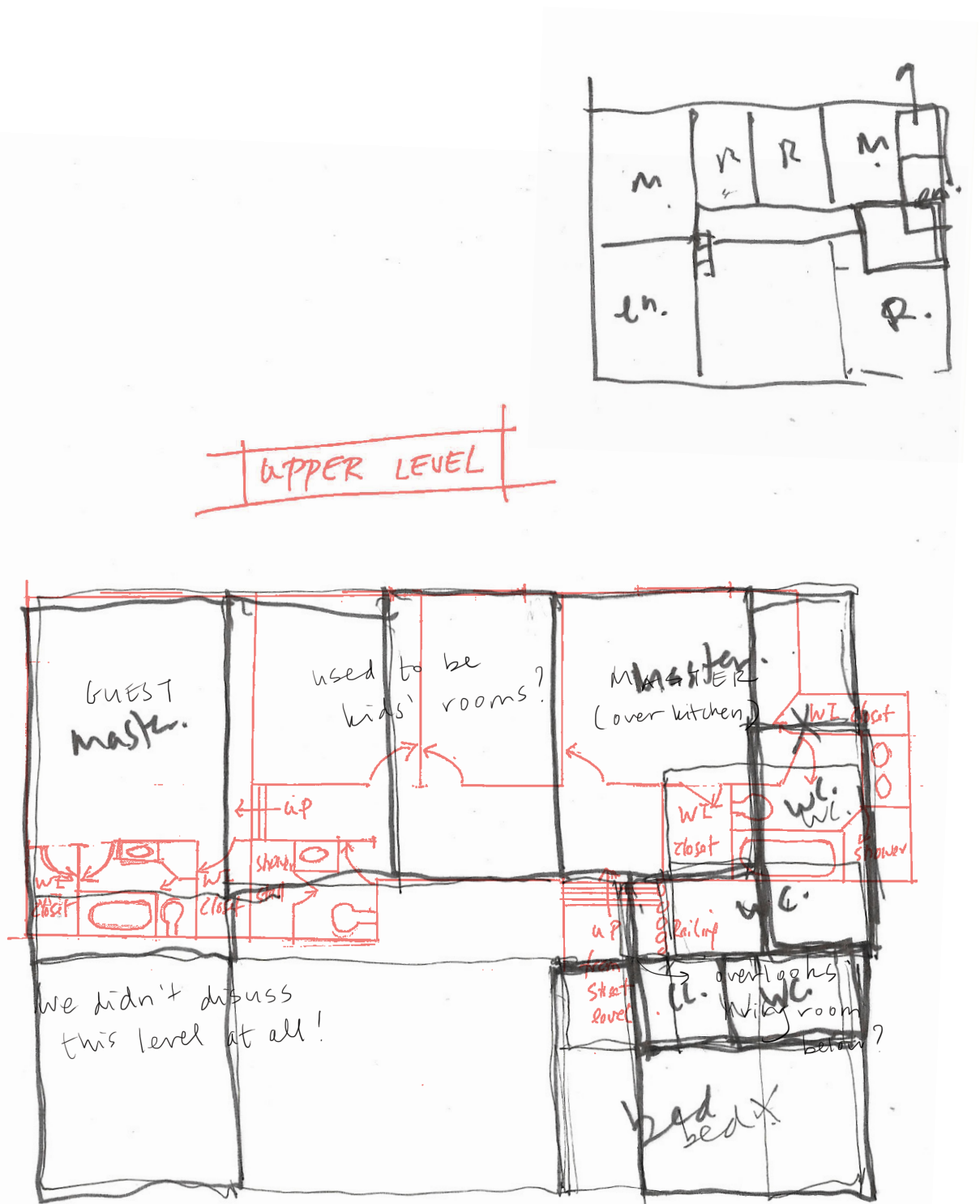


Fig. D.12 *Home in Oakville v1*, image by Uncle D and author.

I attempt to fit all the existing rooms into a two-storey typology. I try to squish 5 bedrooms into the second floor, but it turns out there are only 4 existing bedrooms in the house.

So why a two storey then? Is the split level house too hard to navigate?

No, just that two storeys are more popular, that's all.

So just a more modern layout then.

That's right, that's right. I don't think we'll actually do anything, I'm just talking about it, right?

Right! We're just talking about it. So let's say you're taking down the whole thing and you're going to just redo it from the ground up. Would you keep all the same rooms?

Yeah, I think it's big enough to put a two storey with four bedrooms.

So maybe it's just rearranging the existing rooms into that format.

"I would take down the whole house & build a 2-storey instead." — maintained same number of rooms.

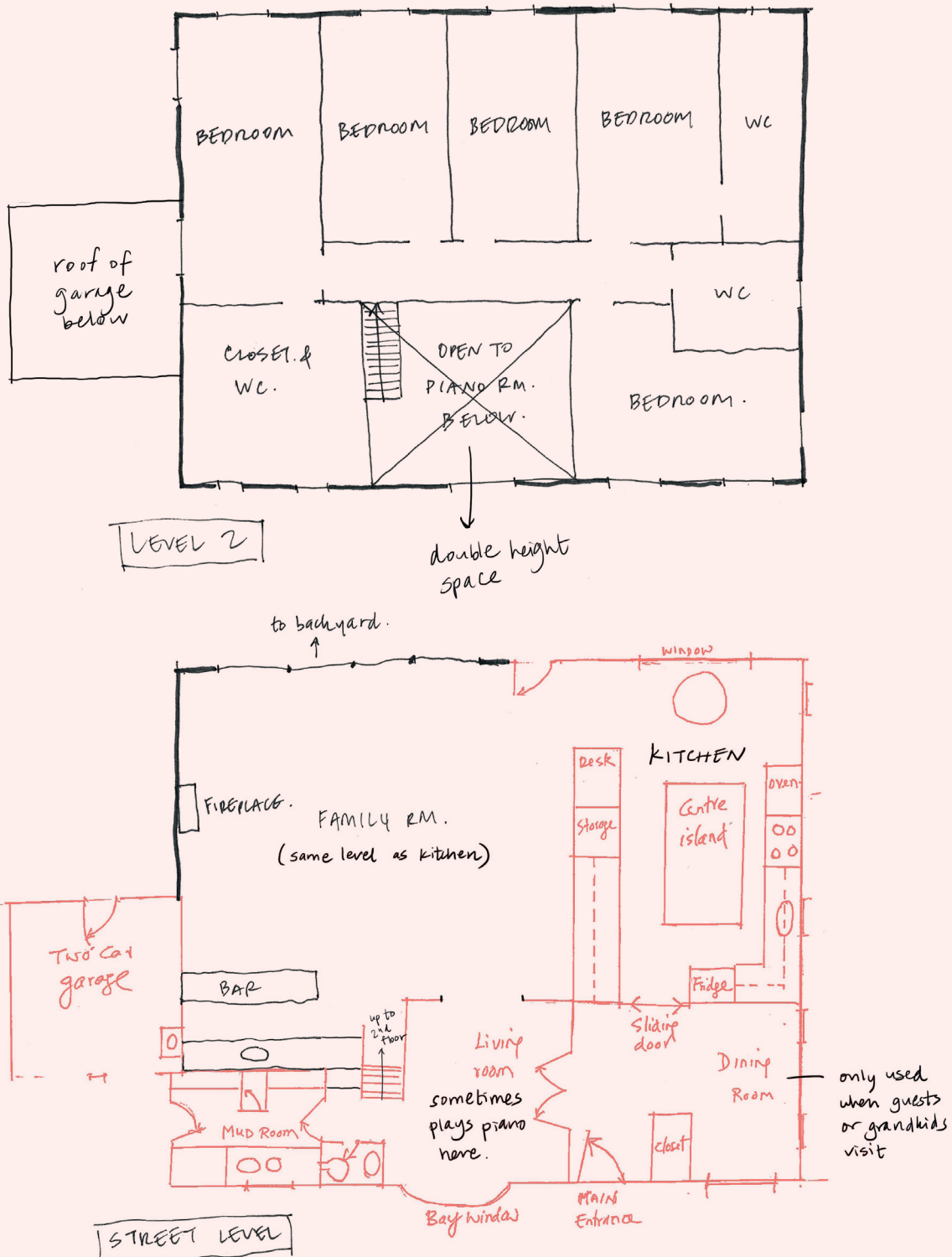


Fig. D.13 Home in Oakville v2, image by Uncle D and author.

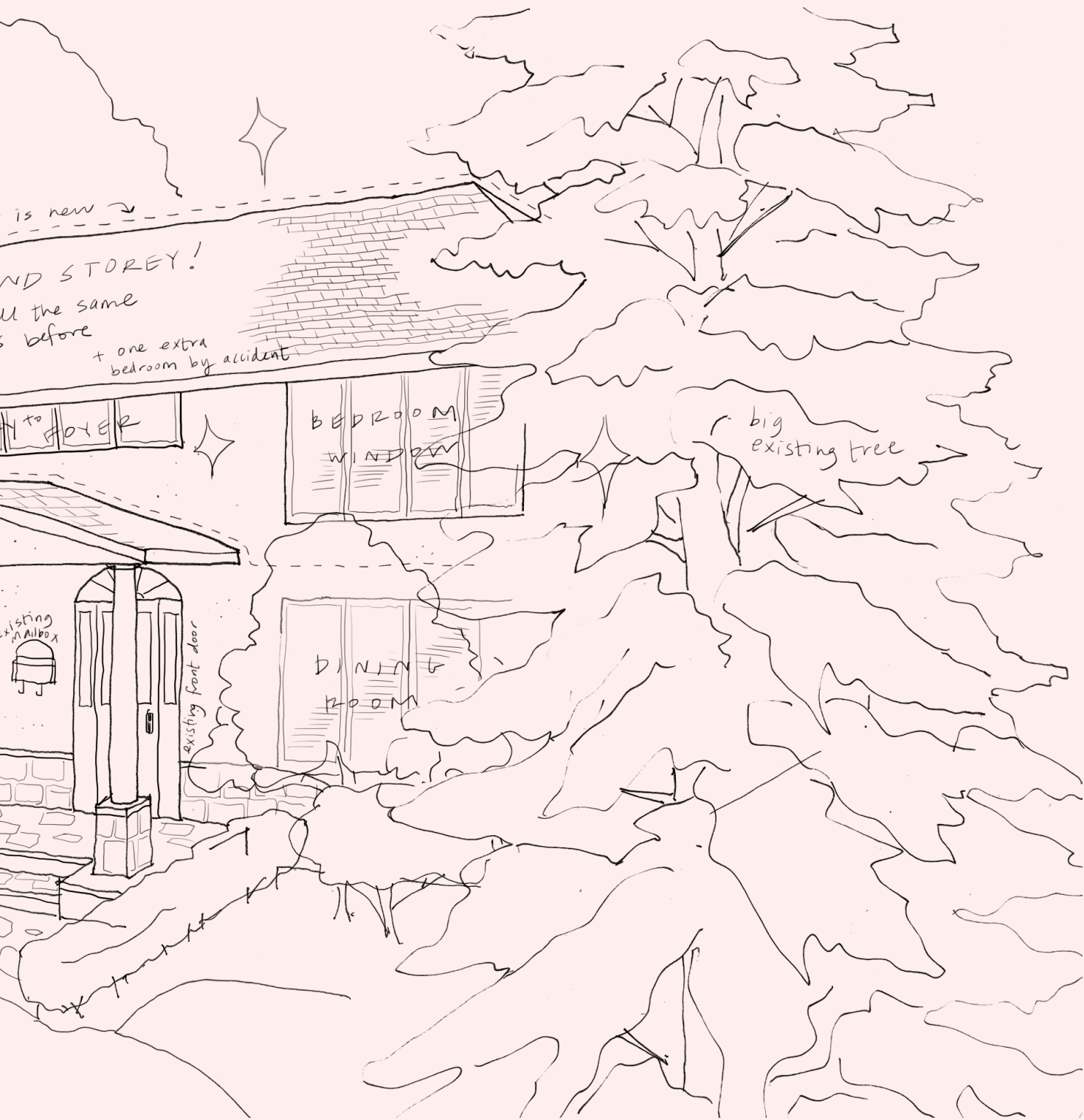
The plans for the second storey end up being a bit awkward, with some extra space on the second floor over the living room.

Looks great!



Fig. D.14 *Second storey proposal*, image by author.

I use the same exterior materials and layout, and add an extra storey on top.



On the value of space

In his current home shared with his wife, Uncle D owns around twenty times more space per person than in his home in Hong Kong. I fully expect to do a speculative design exercise in shrinking the house and yard in place. Downsizing and moving to a smaller house or apartment is a common but much dreaded phenomenon in Canada for those whose children have moved out of a single-family house, leaving behind unused empty space. But somehow, I end up sketching up plans for a two-storey house instead.

Despite this being a speculative exercise, Uncle D sees value in owning a more popular building typology. The elements of his ideal home already exist where he currently lives, so rather than adjusting the home to his own spatial needs, his first reaction is to adjust it to suit the speculative market. As much as a home is a place of unique spatial and cultural preference, its value as an investment in this case trumps all other potential changes. Reorganizing the rooms of the split-level into a two-storey house may be the largest speculative design, but its intent is very straightforward. I fully understand that after sharing an apartment unit with 12 other people in Hong Kong, space isn't something a person would readily want to give up. However, there's a clear compromise to living in Canada: in exchange for greenery and more space, there's a yard to take care of and property taxes to pay.

Home is an investment and a reaction to the past.

To summarize

Uncle D's descriptions of his childhood home revolved around *sharing* space and basic survival needs, such as having enough water and living in an apartment with multiple other families.

The value of *property* was clear through Uncle D's design decision to add a second storey to his house, despite mentioning that the house was too large and many rooms are often unused.

1964

In Hong Kong

*200 Prince Edward Rd,
Kowloon, Hong Kong*

*1 unit within a 4-storey post-war
tong lau*

*~16 people (6 family members, 4
groups of tenants)*

Uncle E grew up exposed to the West. In a family of economic immigrants who came to Hong Kong from mainland China, he took pride in living in a British colony for 4-5 years before moving to Canada. His home was located near a wealthy British gated community, separated by the nearby train bridge. His family of six lived in the largest room of the apartment, the “living room.” It was partitioned into a bedroom with large windows and lots of light. The apartment was shared with at least four other families, with their own bedrooms lining a double-loaded corridor.

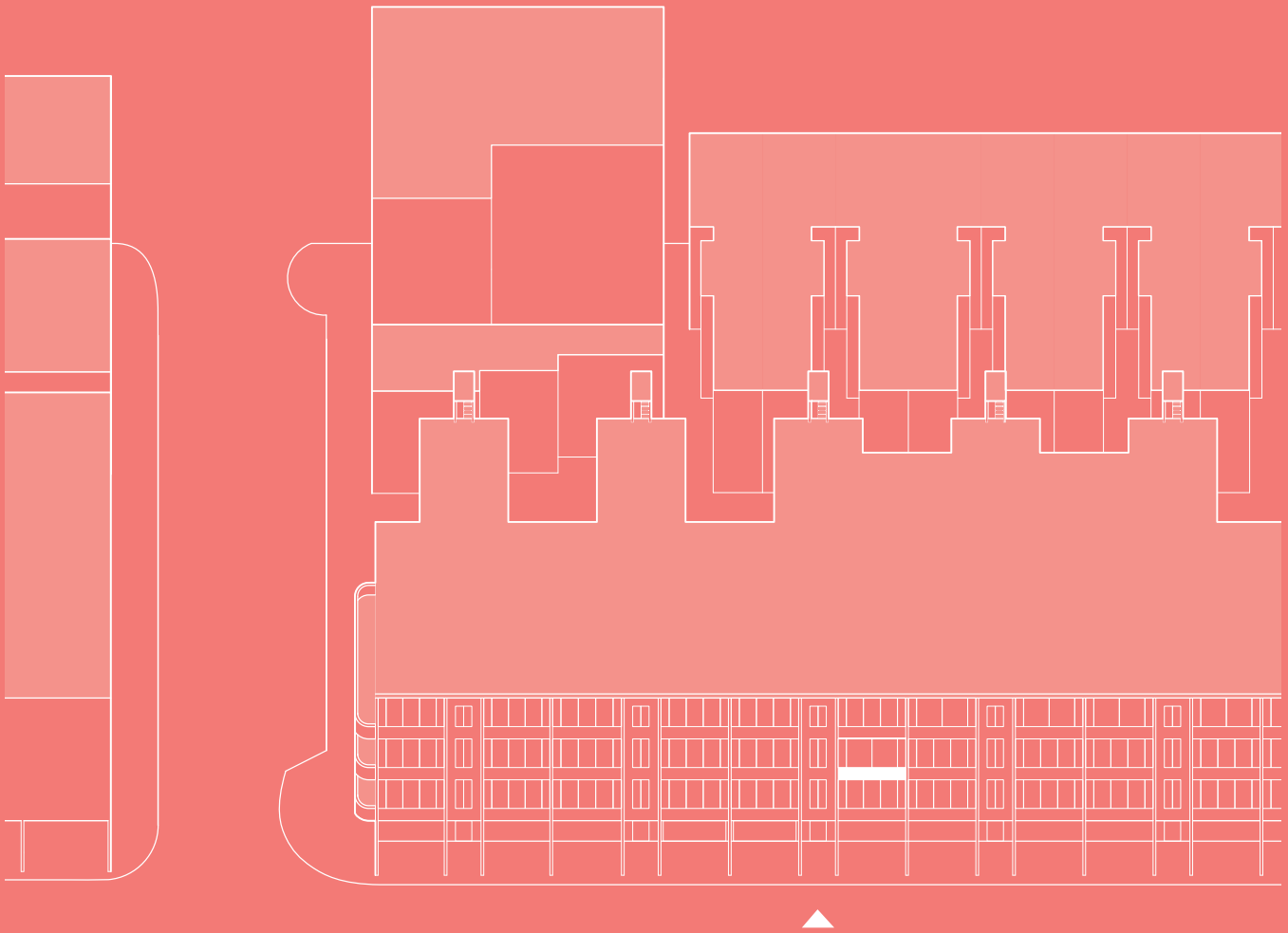


Fig. E.1 *Uncle E's home in Kowloon*, image by author.

Uncle E currently lives on a beautiful two-acre property, tucked away from the street. He enjoys the greenery of countryside living, and was drawn to this house by the sunroom. It's the brightest room in the house and hosts a variety of plant life, including outdoor plants temporarily brought inside to shelter from the winter. He readily proposed two suggestions for the sunroom: to open up the space by replacing the partial wall and gas fireplace with a woodstove; and to connect the sunroom to the sitting room by removing that wall as well.

*Ottawa
Ontario, Canada*

2-storey house

2 people



Fig. E.2 *Uncle Es home in Ottawa*, image by author.

1964

200 Prince Edward Road

Kowloon, Hong Kong

Natalie:

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Uncle E:

Crowded, nice neighbourhood, 200 Prince Edward Road, second floor. Water shortage and limited running water.

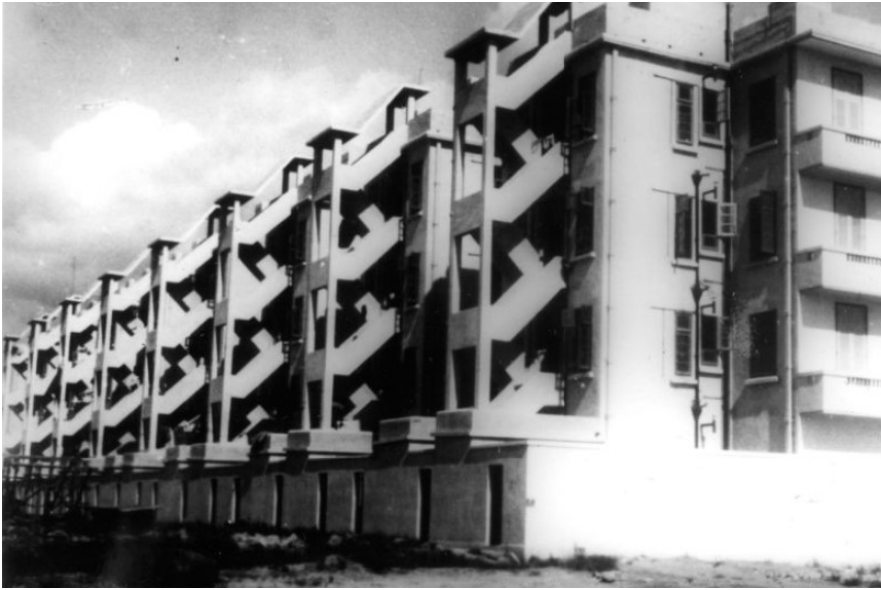


Fig. E.3 *Prince Edward Road, Kowloon City* 九龍城太子道, c. 1930, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, P2007.0157.

This image shows the back stairs of the Prince Edward Road Flats, or Modern Flats. They were 16 pre-war tenement buildings whose European style targeted middle-class families.

Fig. E.4 *Aerial view of Mong Kok* 從空中鳥瞰旺角, 1982, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, S2009.1335.

Housing for wealthy British communities were built on the other side of the train bridge from Uncle E's apartment.

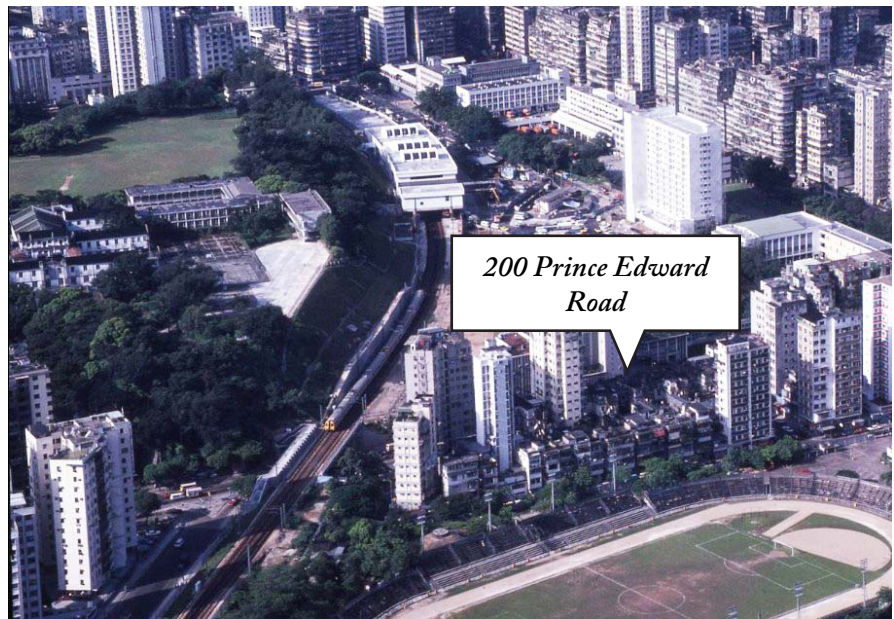




Fig. E.5 Conservation plan, 2009, Hong Kong Urban Renewal Authority.

Where we lived in Hong Kong, we were very close to a very wealthy area, a gated community. It was a certain sense of pride almost, being in that area. That speaks to our psychology, of being exposed to the West. Plus our school had an English teacher who was from Canada. He showed us old movies about schools in Canada. So that was kind of interesting. And then we all eventually wound up in Canada.

Who lived in that gated community, was it British people?

Yeah, that's where all the money was. There are areas of Hong Kong just like that now, basically separated from the plebeians, that only the wealthy go to.

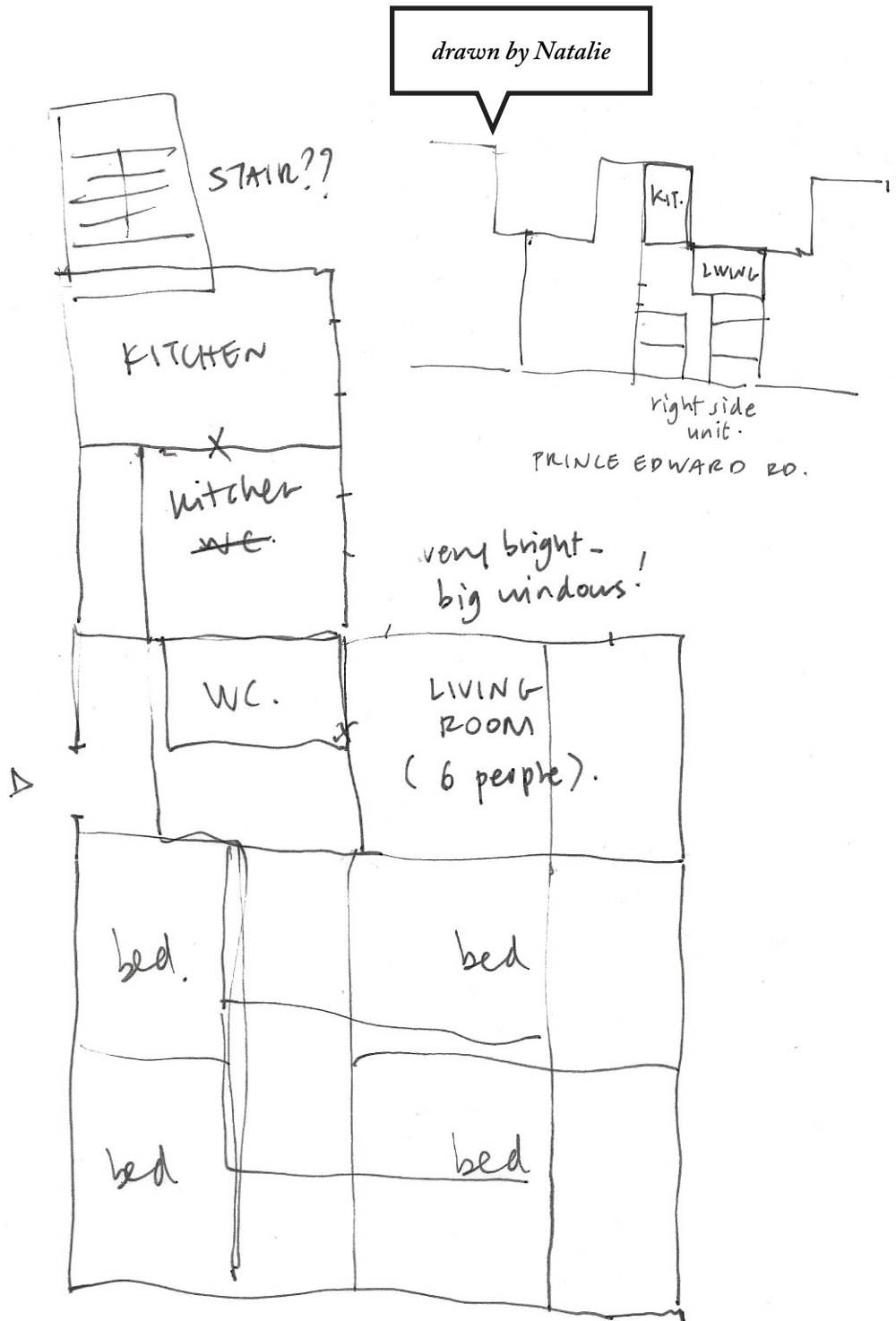


Fig. E.6 Home in Kowloon v1, image by author.

Were you friends with neighbours in your apartment?

Not really. I just remember the hallway was pretty long—it probably wasn't that long, but we would put a board across on the floor and play ping pong. The other thing was that it was like these row apartments, so my brother and I would go to the roof and play up there.

Could you see into the gated community from there?

No, we were probably a few kilometres away. On top of that, our apartment was very close to the train that went from downtown Kowloon to the New Territories and there was an overpass over our street. And we can't see past that. So there was a definite divide.

overlap
with other
drawing

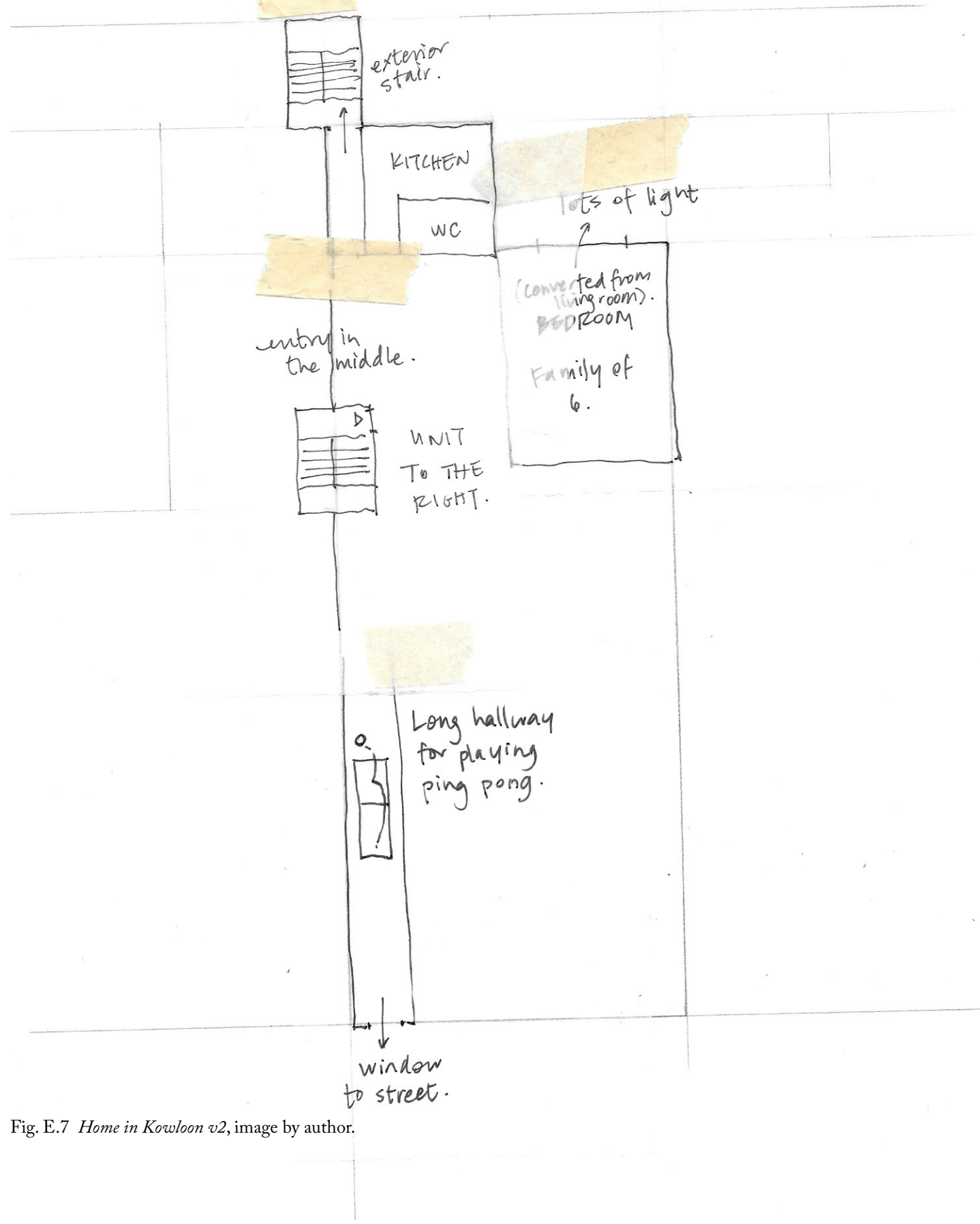


Fig. E.7 Home in Kowloon v2, image by author.

[...]

When [my sister] would go back to Hong Kong over the years, the attitude was that people who left Hong Kong were peasants. We were basically backwater, we were treated like country bumpkins. Hong Kong definitely has a very straight colonial ego to it.

It may be that by pointing out difference, people are reinforcing their own identity. I think it comes back to ideas of belonging as inclusion for some people, and exclusion for others. People are unfortunately also often critical of other cultures here in Canada.

The prejudice that exists in Canada is not on the surface, it's very much underneath. When I moved to Ottawa, I felt like I was Chinese for the first time.

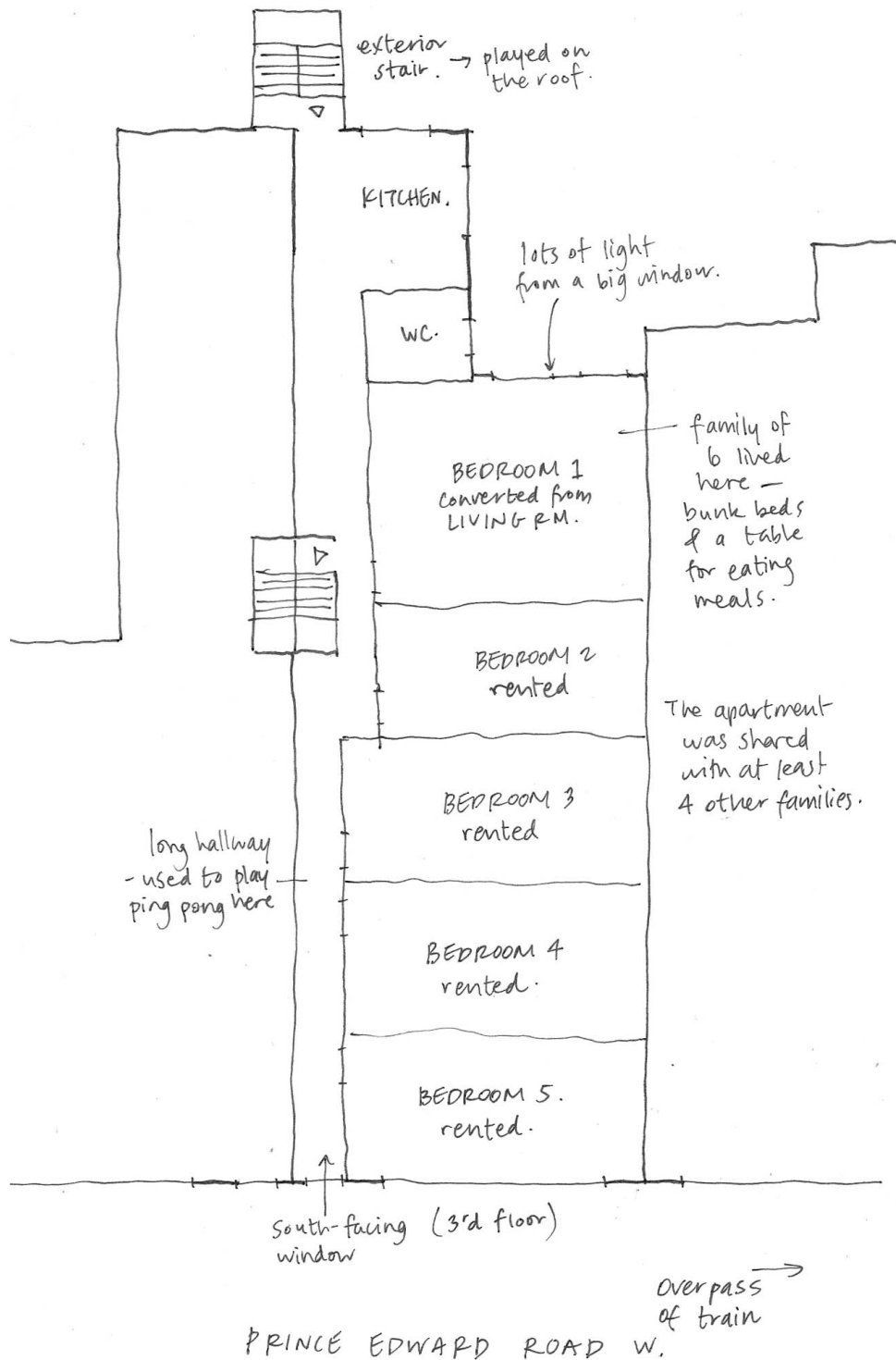


Fig. E.8 Home in Kowloon v3, image by author.

“This is a plan of your Hong Kong home on Prince Edward Road, based on photos and images on Google maps. Let me know if you think something is missing or off about this sketch!”

[...]

Because of my experiences in Ottawa, I reached out to the Chinese Federation. So that was me reaching out to people to relate to because I was treated as different by the regular people. It's kind of like the chicken and the egg. We all want to fit in, and I tried to fit in as much as I could in the countries I lived in, but every once in a while you realize, I'm not like them.

[...]

We were basically second class citizens in Hong Kong and yet I was proud to live there just because we were able to. It's that kind of psychology, that the West is right and everything is correct here.

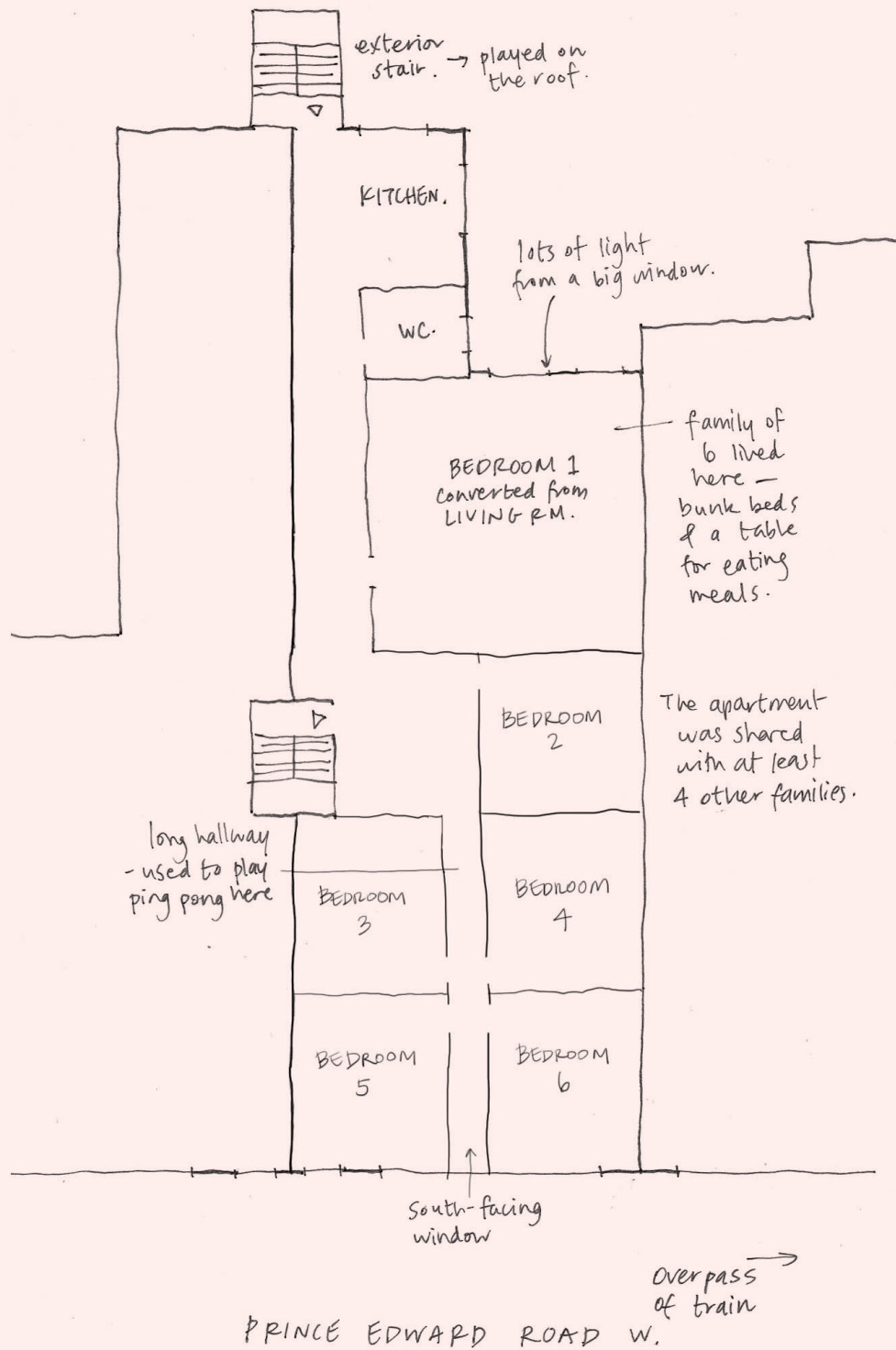


Fig. E.9 *Home in Kowloon v4*, image by author.

“The apartment in Hong Kong was much wider as opposed to being narrow with a single row of rooms. My memory is that there were rooms on both sides.”

Fig. E.10 *Prince Edward Road flats*,
Barbara Merchant, 1941, Gwulo.





Fig. E.11 中文（香港）：太子道西//190-204/210-212號雙數門牌, 2010, Chong Fat, Wikimedia Commons.

The remaining Prince Edward Flats have a Grade II heritage designation, and the facade has since been renovated to preserve it.

On negotiating identity

13 “Prince Edward Road West/Yuen Ngai Street - Heritage Preservation & Revitalisation,” Urban Renewal Authority, 2022, <https://www.ura.org.hk/en/project/heritage-preservation-and-revitalisation/prince-edward-road-west-yuen-ngai-street>.

14 Centaline Property, “200 Prince Edward Road West,” Centaline Property, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://hk.centanet.com/estate/en/200-Prince-Edward-Road-West/1-EESGGPBXPE>.

The four-storey postwar *tong lau* building that Uncle E lived in is preserved and restored today as a grade II historic building.¹³ The building sits on the busy commercial street front of Prince Edward Road, with larger-than-average units at around 1,100 square feet.¹⁴ I sketch pieces of the building and locate them within the bounds of the plan, rearranging them until they fit: an entrance in the middle of the unit; a long hallway with a window at the end overlooking the street; bright living quarters with large windows; a kitchen and washroom towards the back; a stair to the roof from which they could not see past the train bridge into the wealthy British neighbourhoods.

Uncle E’s consciousness of the British colonial impact within the city is evident throughout our conversations, as he describes negotiating between hierarchies of “Chineseness.” The status associated with proximity to the West seems paradoxical; while it was a point of pride to live near a British neighbourhood in Hong Kong, after moving to Canada (an arguably whiter and more Western British colony, albeit more rural) Uncle E was seen as “backwater” by those living in Hong Kong. This contrasts with what I read about earlier migrants referring to Canada as “Gold Mountain,” a place to find economic prosperity. As Hong Kong became a cosmopolitan trading hub and colonial success story, it was seen as more desirable than living in Canada. However, a Western education was still highly valued among those living and working in Hong Kong.

Home is in between national identities and conscious of the West.

Burlington

Ontario, Canada

Can you describe the house where you lived in the GTA?

We recently moved away from the GTA. We had a bungalow on a 2-acre property there, so it was spread out. With 8 distinct rooms, 2.5 baths, and an upstairs attic, which was not finished.



Fig. E.12 *Home in Burlington*, image by Uncle E.

The seven acre property encompassed two ponds, a house with eight distinct rooms, and a garage. The house was set back from the road on a forested driveway.

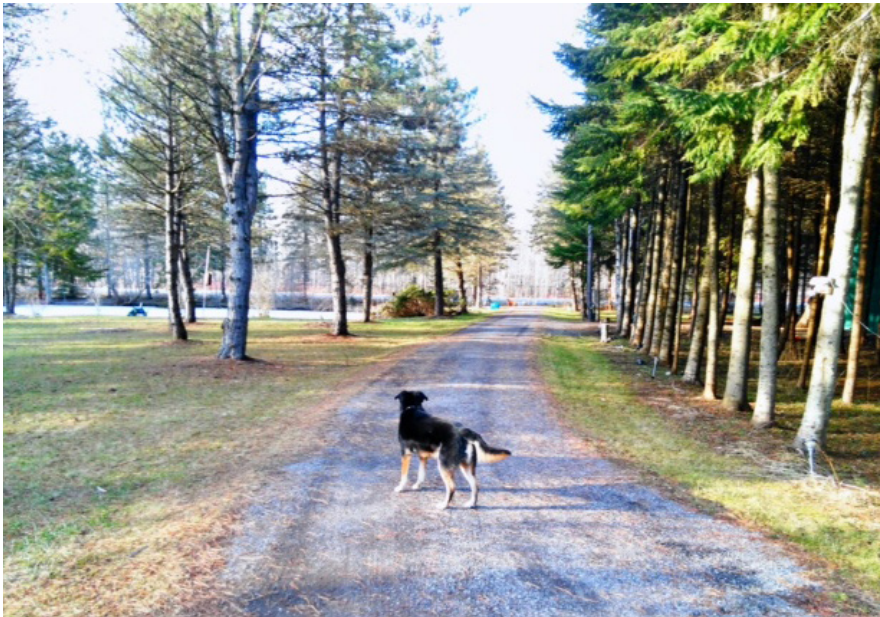


Fig. E.13 *Home in Burlington driveway*, image by Uncle E.

We actually never liked that house. We were always thinking of renovating it, and then we finally retired, and we actually renovated the second floor into a loft apartment.

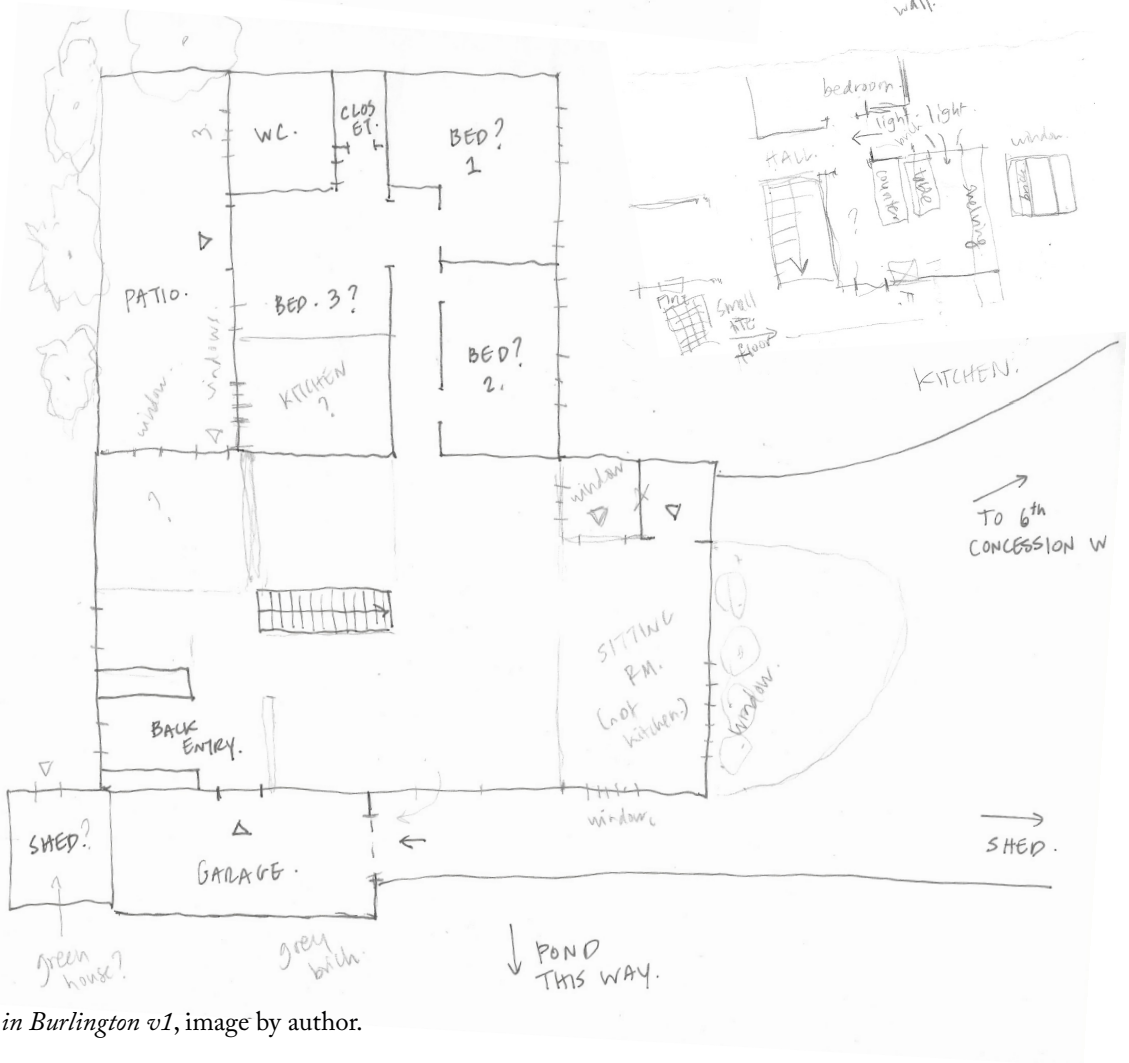
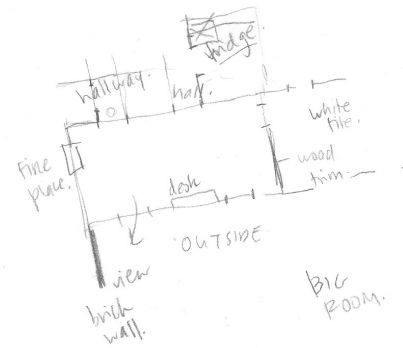
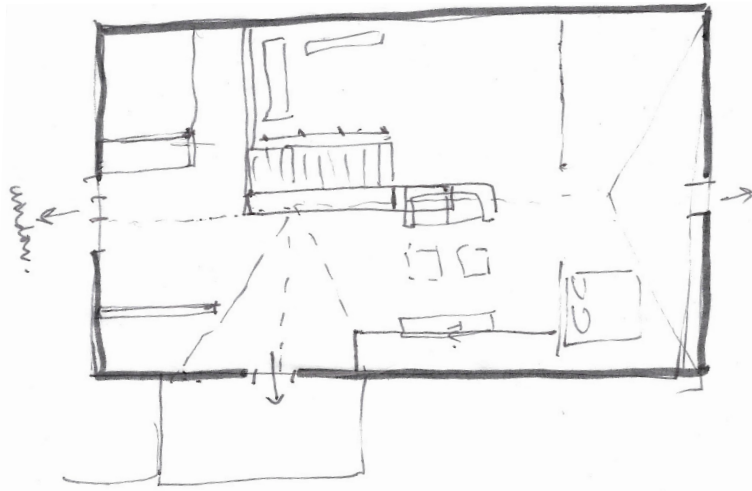


Fig. E.14 Home in Burlington v1, image by author.

We were just in the process of putting in a bathroom and a kitchen, and the entire family decided to move to Ottawa. We all decided to leave the GTA to move closer to our family in Montreal.

Can you walk me through the house?

When you walk in from the front, there's a kind of mud room, then a sitting room. Which basically nobody used. Then there's the family room, If you walked in, then you see the whole hallway going down. There's a dining room to the right which you mentioned as a "mystery room." Then there were two more bedrooms going down to the end to the left. And there's the kitchen, and the master bedroom.

4:00
 wanted to be here
 white redstone ground
 floor. → granny suite.
 for family.

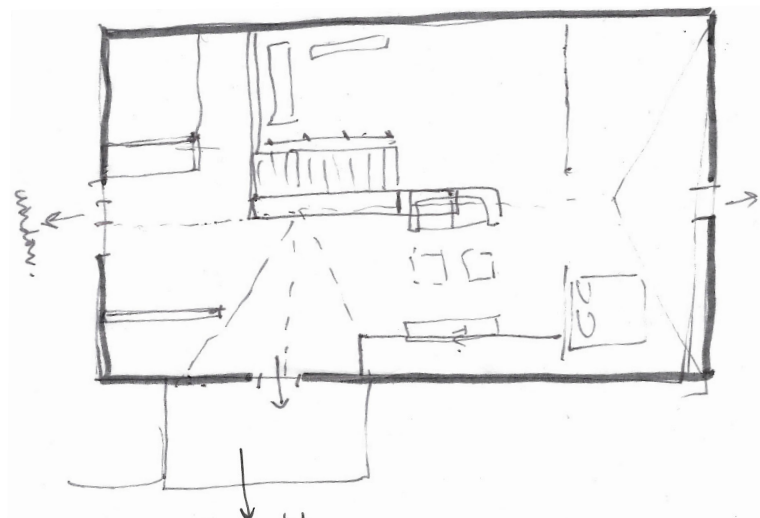
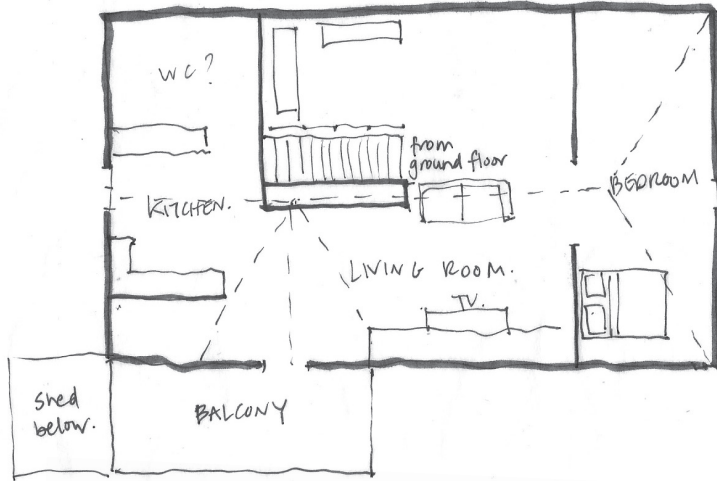


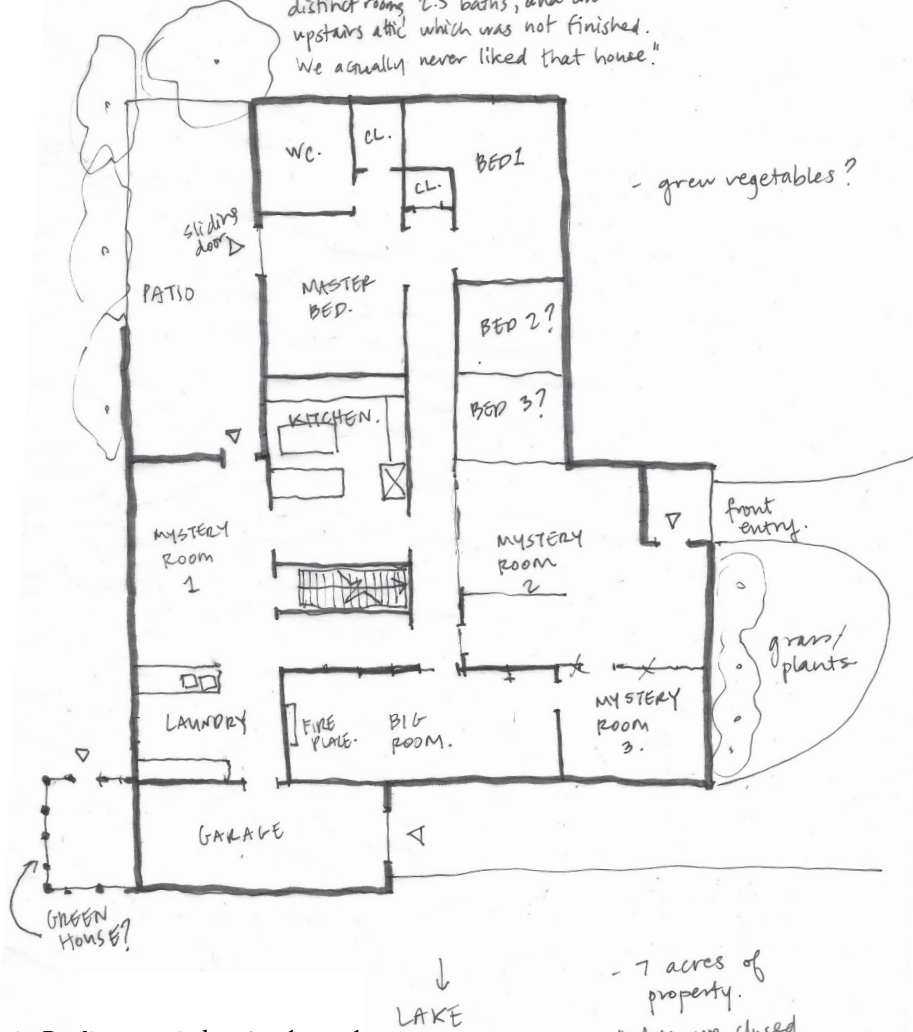
Fig. E.15 Home in Burlington v2, drawing by author.

So the traffic pattern was, we used to walk from one end of the house to the other. It was a very dark hallway, so it was always a little bit claustrophobic even. The house itself was very dark, small windows, not open concept in any way. So in our minds, we always thought we'd tear it down and open it up.

We had talked about our retirement, what we wanted to do and those were things that we were hoping for. We finally had the time and the money to make that place into our own. So for the longest time, we just put up with whatever we had. When we were in Hong Kong, we did what we needed to do to survive, to be better in the future.



"We had a bungalow, with 8 distinct rooms, 2.5 baths, and an upstairs attic which was not finished. We actually never liked that house."



- grew vegetables?

- 7 acres of property.
 "When we closed the gate, it was like we were in our own sanctuary."

Fig. E.16 Home in Burlington v3, drawing by author.

So I think this kind of carried over. Chinese people are very pragmatic, we do what we need to do to survive.

On Google maps I saw that the property is quite large! What was it like living there?

We bought that house not for the house, but for the land. So that was what we fell in love with, the park-like setting of the house.

[...]

We were really looking forward to retiring there because we had a huge plot of land that we hardly ever used because we were too busy. We loved that property—I still miss it.

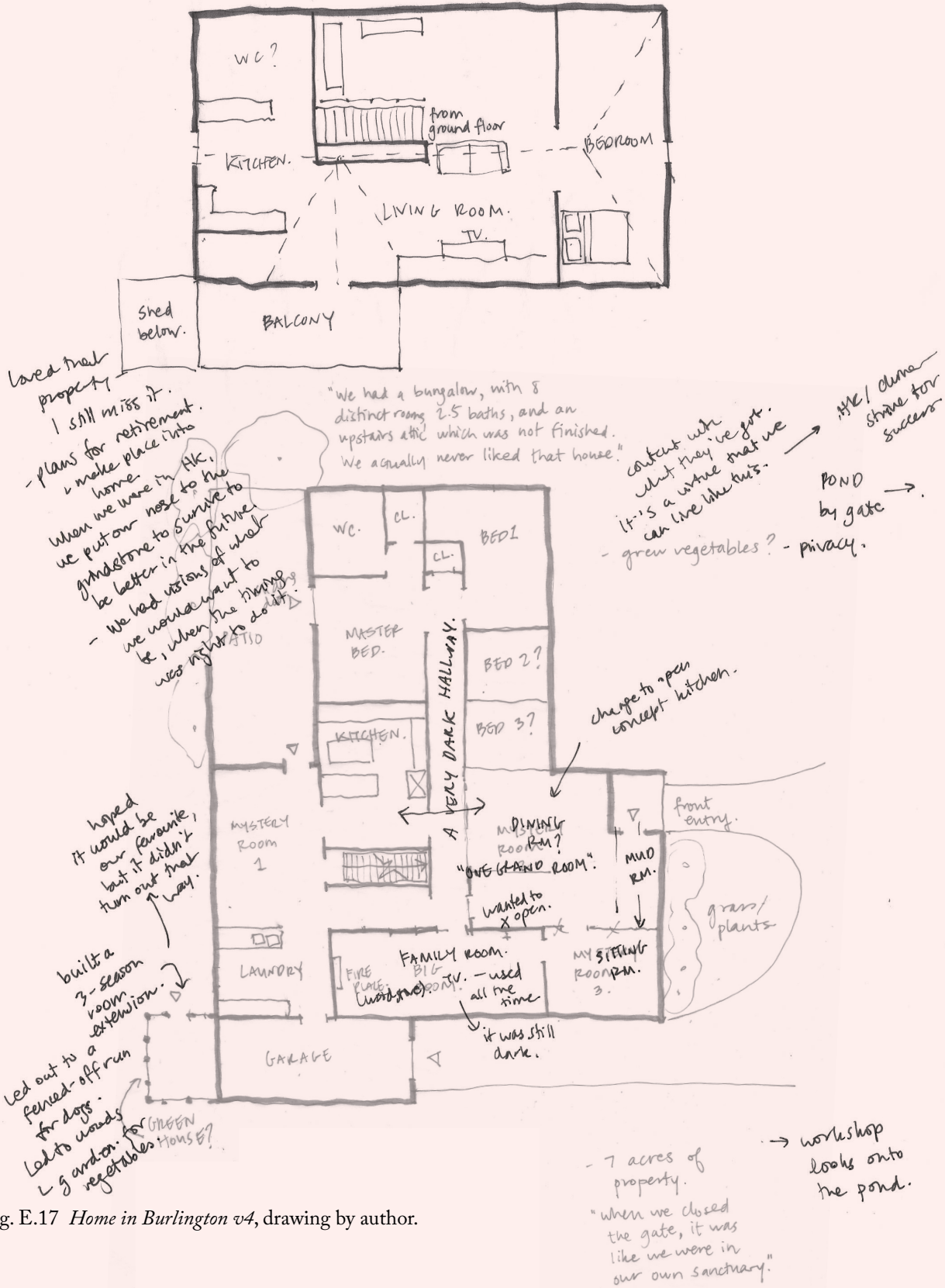


Fig. E.17 Home in Burlington v4, drawing by author.

On “good enough” spaces

Uncle E talks about the site as the most attractive part of his house in Burlington. His affinity for the large site surrounded by nature was influenced by his rural upbringing in China and perhaps a reaction to his cramped urban quarters in Hong Kong. Uncle E and his wife had an ambitious number of plans for the house. I’m struck by how they’d lived there for over twenty years with an unfinished loft, just like Uncle C was living in a house with an unfinished basement. It made sense for them to adapt their lifestyle to fit the house, rather than the other way around, until they retired and finally had enough time to make changes.

From Uncle E’s photographs, I piece together a general outline of a house that was inhabited but never fully became an ideal home. They had just begun to set their plans for the house into motion when they decided to move to Ottawa to be closer to family.

Home is more than enough in itself.

2022

Ottawa
Ontario, Canada

What was your first impression of Canada?

My first impression of Canada was that it's so dark all the time. What really attracted us to this house was the sunroom, which is my favourite because it's the brightest room.

When we landed in Montreal, one major impression I had—besides the cold, because we arrived in October and it was already getting cold and with the heat from Hong Kong and China, you're just not used to cold like that—was the darkness. It was so dark all the time. Because near the equator, we don't get the long nights like we have here.



Fig. E.18 *Sunroom in Ottawa*, images provided by Uncle E.

This is his favourite room in the house because of how bright it is.



And I still find that a problem. I gravitate to the sunroom because I don't like it when it's dark. In the winter, I'll turn on as much light as possible. In order to chase away, the winter blues, right?

Do you grow plants and stuff in the sunroom?

It's a very Chinese thing. We have a jungle of plants. My mom used to be that way, and my wife's mom. So we just love having plants. I think it's part of our DNA.

In China, we were from a farming community, so I think that's been passed on to us. I think we have an affinity towards greenery.



Fig. E.19 *Sunroom in Ottawa*, image by Uncle E.

This is a more recent photo of the sunroom. Some plants stay indoors all year round while others are brought in by Uncle E and his wife during the winter.

Did you find any objects that you brought with you from Hong Kong when you moved to your current house?

No, it was basically just stuff that we collected over the years. That house managed to accumulate so much stuff. I think having grown up poor, if you have the chance to buy something, you buy it thinking that you may need it later. If there's something you've worn and used, you hang onto it because it could serve another purpose. Growing up experiencing the kind of poverty that we experienced in China, I never wanted to throw things away.



Fig. E.20 *House in Ottawa*, image provided by Uncle E.

What would you change about your current house?

Here, my next project is to remove that wall in between the sun room and the dining room. And put in a wood stove instead of the gas fireplace, make the whole room more open concept. We haven't done it yet, though.

I don't think that wall is actually supporting anything, I think it's just free.

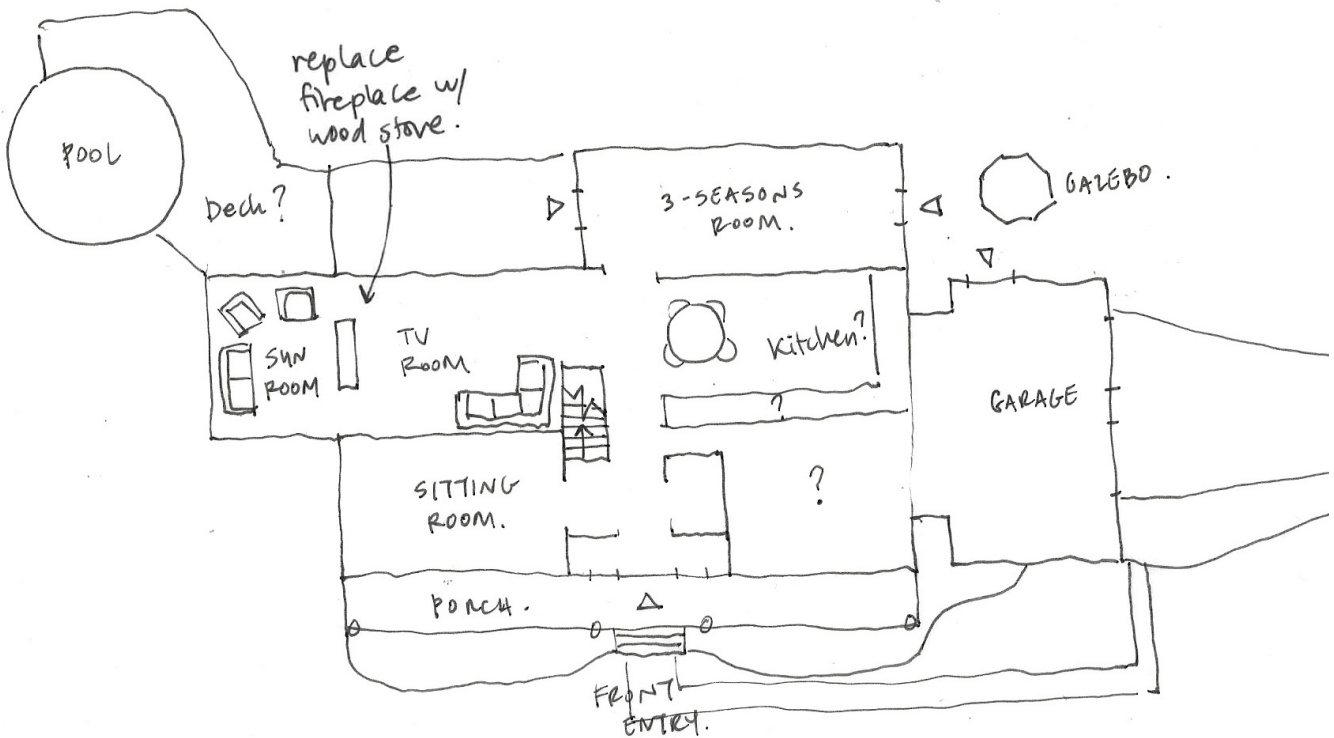


Fig. E.21 *Home in Ottawa v1*, drawing by author.

The other thing I would like to change is the sitting room up front. I was wondering if I could take out the wall between that and the dining room. At least that would be kind of connected, even though that whole section where the fireplace is stepped down from the main floor by about eight inches. I thought, “What a stupid thing they did.” It makes no sense.

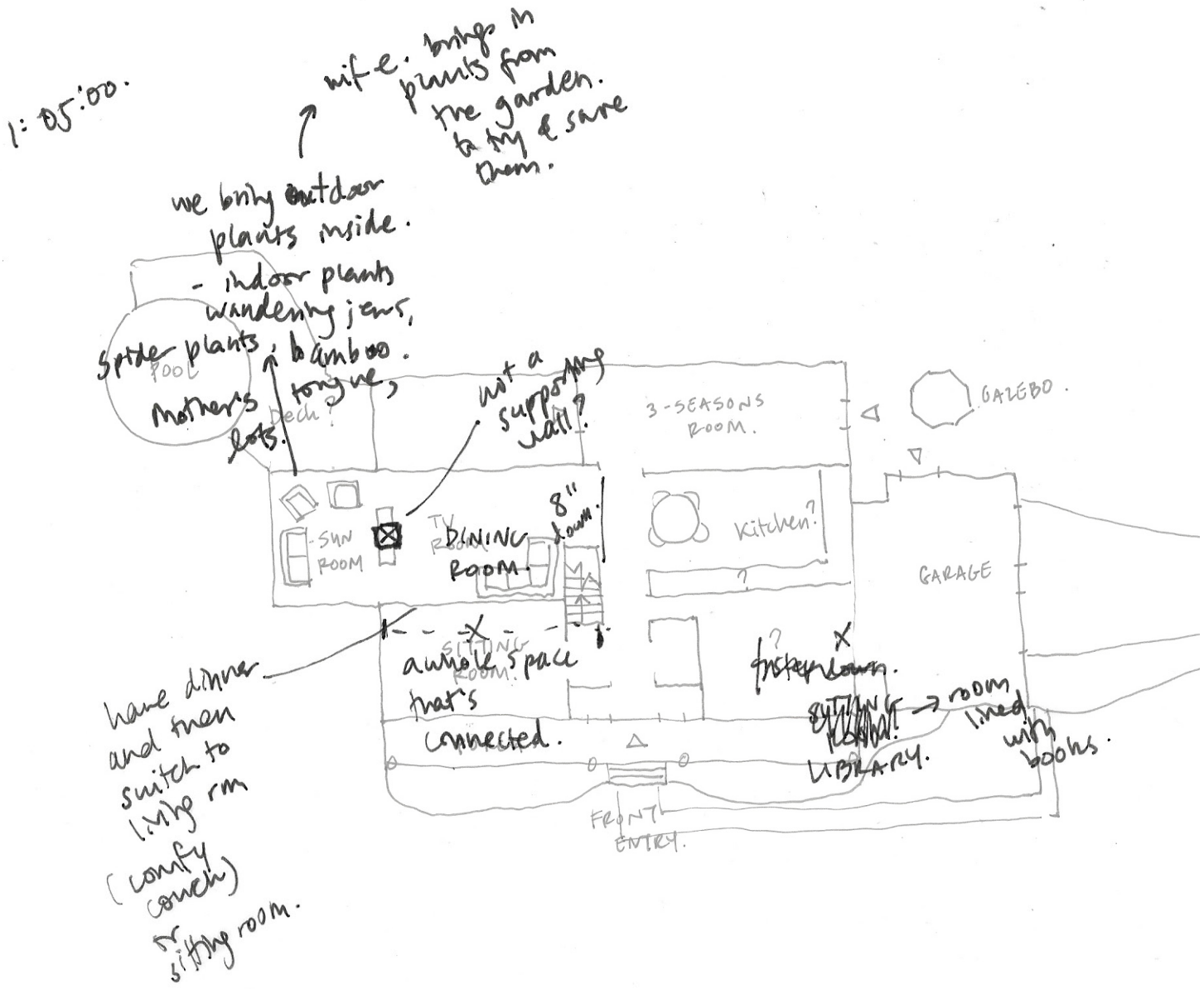


Fig. E.22 Home in Ottawa v2, drawing by author.

I would think maybe open that space up and we would have basically the whole space that's connected. So what do you think of that idea?

I think that sounds pretty cool. You just want to take down all the walls here, there won't be any left!

Well, there's only so many walls I can take down. But I think that would be a nice kind of spacing. From the dining room, we could have our dinner there and then whoever wants to adjourn to the sitting room, they could sit on the nice comfy couch, or they could go to the sunroom if they want and retire there.

This drawing is a perspective of our design suggestion. Let me know what you think!

It's a nice drawing of the concept room I have and I really appreciate it.

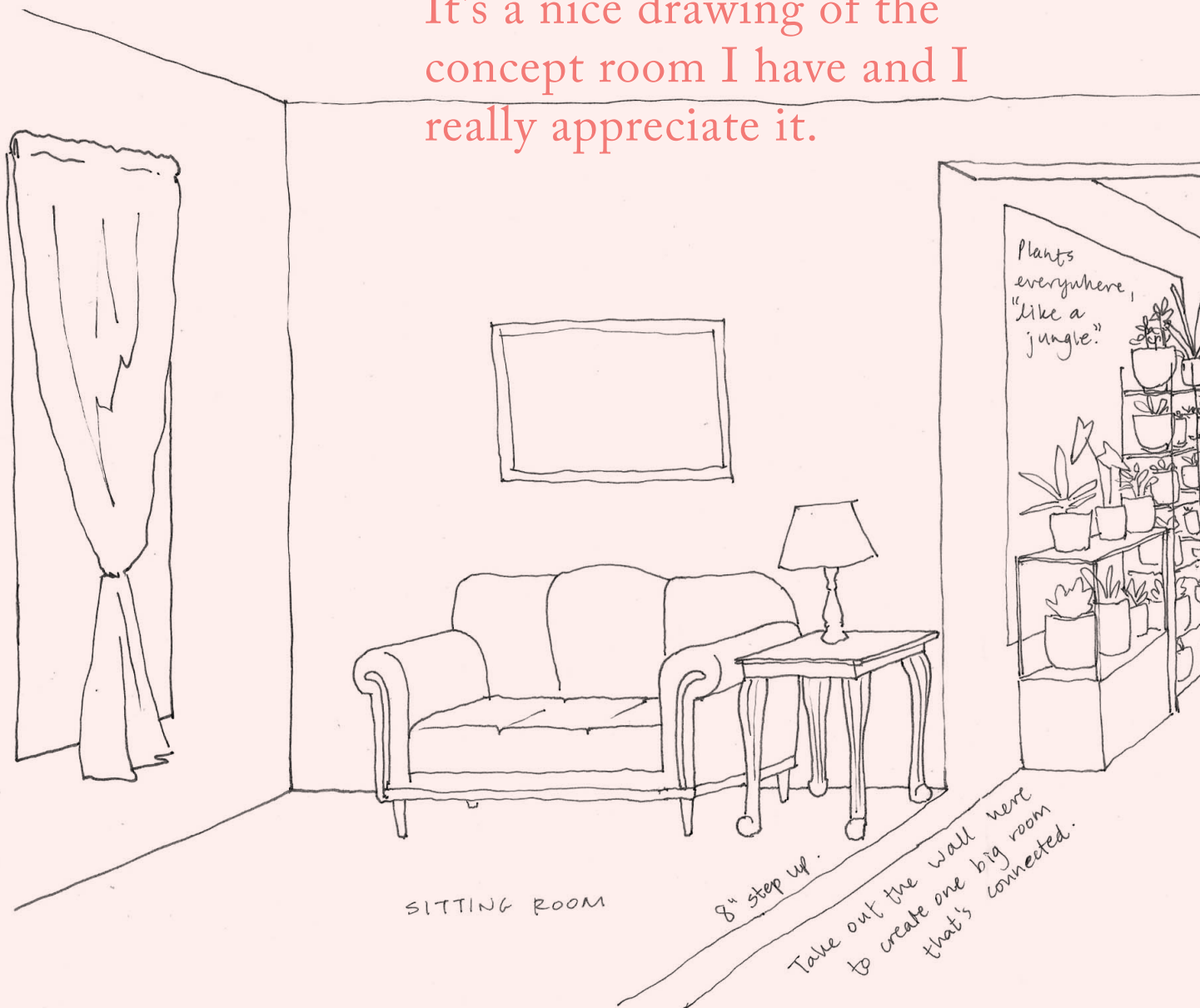


Fig. E.24 *Expanded sunroom proposal*, image by author.

Is it structural enough to span across?
probably.



↑
SUN ROOM
&
DINING ROOM
↓

Remove the wall
here & replace gas
fireplace with a
woodstove

On spatial experience

Uncle E's move to Ottawa was spurred by a pull of the family networks which brought him to Canada in the first place, still strong enough to uproot him from his house amid a long-awaited renovation. Like Aunty B, he mentioned reaching out to transnational networks to find the comfort of like-minded people. Within times of movement, these networks are a common source of reliability and are clearly a driving force for what constitutes home.

In choosing a new house, Uncle E gravitated confidently towards the brightness of the sunroom, a quality that his family's room in Hong Kong also boasted and that his home in Burlington lacked. Although they are new to this house, Uncle E already plans to spread the brightness of the sunroom deeper into the house, opting for a more "open concept" layout. As I draw my second and final expanded sunroom perspective of this study almost a year later, I'm reminded of the same sense of familiarity that ran through my conversation with Aunty A. In beginning this research, I would not have guessed that a bright sunroom full of plants would be a common element within Hong Kong Canadian homes.

Home is shaped by its environment.

To summarize

Uncle E described his childhood home in relation to wealthy British neighbourhoods. His sense of “*Chineseness*” was relative to where he was located in the city, and in the world.

There was a sense of spaces being *good enough* which prevented Uncle E from making major changes to his house, although he and his wife found it dark inside.

Uncle E was strongly drawn to the *spatial quality* and *geographic site* of his current house, which is a large secluded property surrounded by trees that he compared to growing up in rural China. He also had plans to change the sunroom in his current house, by opening it up to the other rooms.

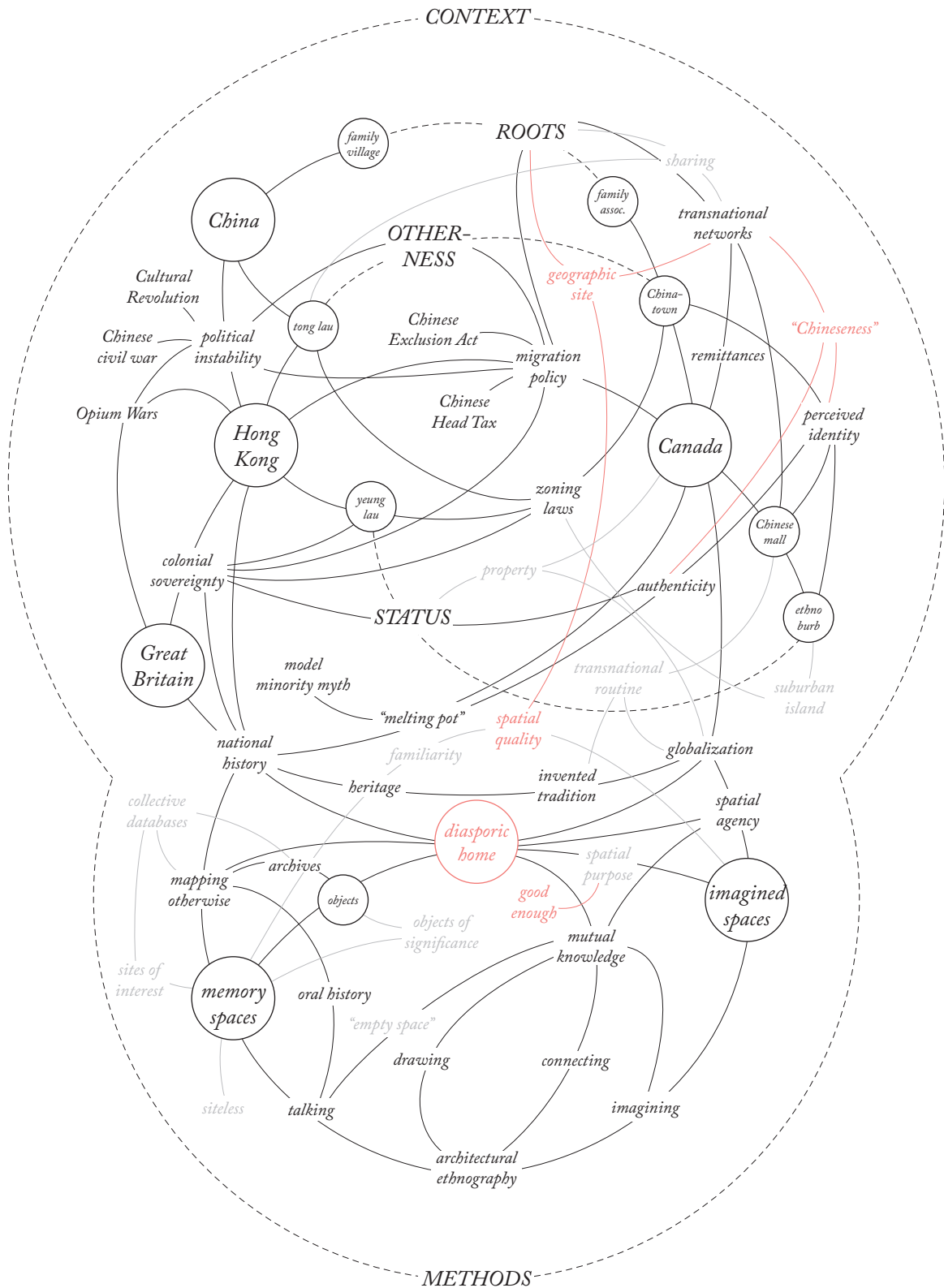


Fig. E.25 Thesis diagram, by author.

3

Learning to Listen

On takeaways from this process and thoughts on moving forward from here.

“Above all in the practice of mapping otherwise, experience is reintroduced as a way of exploring different futures by giving voice to other narratives and uses of space.”

—Nishat Awan, 2016, *Diasporic Agencies: Mapping the City Otherwise*, 119

From engagement processes

- 1 See appendix for the survey results.
- 2 The Kai Tak Airport is no longer in use, but historic photographs of the planes landing so close to mid-rise and high-rise buildings are truly spectacular.

This research explores the homes of five people who moved from Hong Kong to Canada with the agency to claim and shape space as their own. As qualitative interviews, these conversations were focused on relationships between space and belonging.

On talking with people

It's not easy to talk to strangers, and it was important to build rapport through each conversation. Sometimes, the conversations went in unexpected directions and differed from or even contradicted peoples' previous answers to the survey questions.¹ Sometimes, my questions hit dead ends and only elicited one-word answers. As our conversations went on, people often shared more details with me that connected to specific events or feelings.

Terminology was a point of miscommunication, but also highlighted how others perceive the world in different ways. For example, Auntie B's definition of "empty space" actually included many more possibilities such as celebration, storage space, and raising animals; Auntie A referred to Hong Kong as "the colony," directly defining the city based on its British colonial influence. Multiple people mentioned the term "open concept" when referring to their ideal home, potentially alluding to 1970s trends in Western architecture. Although we spoke the same language, the meaning of our words differed based on personal experience.

In general, people spent more time talking about the past than the present. Their stories focused mainly on experiences in the home itself, but also described intersecting historic events and trends. Auntie A recounted stories of the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, when Japanese soldiers occupied the family's laundry compound; Auntie B mentioned that her childhood home was a post-war *tong lau* typology that was popular in Hong Kong; Uncle D's apartment building in Kowloon City could not be built higher than 4 storeys due to flight paths of the nearby Kai Tak airport.² Despite people spending varying amounts of time living in Hong Kong, they had an implicit understanding of historical events related to their homes. This type of knowledge, accessed only through conversation, provides contextual insight on historical narratives from an embodied perspective.

Through this form of engagement, we recorded previously unwritten historical interpretations of space. In future applications, conversation holds great value for the design field to provide "other" perspectives on sites of diasporic memory.

On drawing with people

The floor plan drawings that we produced visualized building layouts alongside memories of lived experience. It was important to discuss the homes before drawing, so that specific elements we talked about would appear in participant drawings as annotations or drawn shapes. I originally intended to draft over participants' plans with scaled drawings; as the research progressed, other peoples' drawings more effectively captured their own sense of space and value. My role quickly adjusted to questioning, annotating, and adding details to the drawings rather than re-creating them. Most people volunteered to draw when description was difficult, but not without warning that their drawings were not professional or accurate.³ The floor plan was a very effective tool for communication since drawing seemed to come naturally to almost everyone. I noted that despite anonymity, participants seemed to be hesitant to share photographs, perhaps due to a lack of rapport as mentioned in the previous section.

The way people chose to depict each home spoke to each person's values. Aunty A drew the trees and yard in her plans, which were a very significant part of home for her; Uncle E also included photographs of his yard and the surrounding greenery which attracted him to that location. In drawings of past homes, moveable furniture was rarely included unless we specifically discussed those items beforehand, such as Uncle D's water tank; however, permanent fixtures like bathtubs, sinks, and toilets often made appearances. Except Aunty A, it's worth noting that drawings of present homes generally contained more detail than those of past homes.

Bedrooms were left empty in almost all participant drawings—perhaps because these spaces were too personal—unless we discussed specific aspects of that bedroom, such as with Aunty B. All four plans of current homes drawn by participants omitted a basement plan, and one omitted an upstairs plan. From Uncle E, who sent photographs rather than drawings, I did not receive any documentation of the basement. Multiple people mentioned that their basement was unused, or only used occasionally for laundry or as a play area for their grandchildren; Uncle C's basement was unfinished. This made it clear that in today's homes, the basement is not considered an emotionally nor a physically necessary space. What people excluded from their drawings was just as insightful as what they did include.

3 For one example of this, see Uncle D's plan drawings noted "not to scale."

4 Also note that regardless of economic status, three past homes had chickens onsite at any given time after birthdays or the Chinese New Year festival.

Making space for non-architects to draw plans gives people agency over how they represent their own homes. Through collaborative drawing processes, architects can produce shared knowledge on diasporic homes through more diverse forms of representation.

On past homes

Density was a defining feature of homes in Hong Kong that contrasted most significantly with homes in Canada. The number of people living in one unit was between six and thirteen, within three to six bedrooms, always including multiple families or groups of people, and often intergenerational. Only one past home was a detached building, while the other four were units within mid-rise or high-rise buildings. Two out of five past homes, a *tong lau* and a bungalow, shared space with commercial businesses and housed servants on the premises; two out of five homes, both *tong lau*, were tenement housing with multiple families in one unit that partitioned the living room into a bedroom. I was surprised to find that all five housed people who were not related to them by blood, whether they were servants or other tenants, which altered my perception of what relationships make up a person's home.

Each childhood home we discussed spoke to differing economic backgrounds and sentiments towards Hong Kong.⁴ The Aunties and Uncles in this study came from families of Hong Kong-based business owners, working class families, and economic immigrants from China. Their familiarity with Hong Kong when they left the city varied from a place where they spent their whole childhood to a transitory place on the way to Canada. Their economic background influenced their relationship to the past as nostalgia-oriented or survival-oriented, as well as what they chose to talk about, and the significance they consciously attributed to Hong Kong as a place to gravitate towards or away from. Participants' relationships to Hong Kong challenged the encompassing term of "Hong Kong Canadian" identity, since their complex migratory statuses and the age at which they moved did not necessarily mean they identified with colonial-era Hong Kong—and even less so once they arrived in Canada.

Participants' economic background also impacted what objects they brought with them; whereas Auntie A, Auntie B, and Uncle C could immediately name things that they collected or brought from Hong Kong, Uncle D and Uncle E did not possess similar keepsakes that held meaning to them as direct connections to their past. Auntie A

attributed deep significance to the objects that connected her to home in Hong Kong, whereas others did not seem to share the same depth of sentiment.

Despite economic hardship, each person seemed to find some kernel of interest or joy in recounting stories of their past homes. For Aunty A, playing in the garden; for Aunty B, the New Year's celebrations in the courtyard; for Uncle C, the visits to *Chek Chue*; for Uncle D, using the water tank in the shared kitchen; for Uncle E, playing ping pong in the bright corridor. In speculative propositions for their current homes, people often discussed these significant spaces. Each of these spatial uses were somehow unexpected to me, as an intergenerational and transnational visitor within these memories.

Drawing past homes revealed what kind of building typologies were familiar to each person—and how foreign the same buildings were to me. This process was useful in dispelling spatial bias about what a room should be used for, and in questioning homogenising narratives about ethnicity in relation to space.

On imagined homes

Of the five people I spoke with, each considered Canada as their home. All five current homes we drew were detached houses with basements, including two bungalows, two two-storey houses, and one split-level house. Currently, each of these homes have between two and four bedrooms and are occupied by between one and two people—a much lower density compared to where they grew up in Hong Kong, with many spaces only used during holiday events when family members return to visit. Home in Canada was connected to transnational networks within the GTA; for example, Aunty B practices *yuan ji* dance at the Chinese mall, and Uncle C knows that Markham has the most authentic Chinese restaurants.

Imagining a change to the home was the biggest variable of the project because each conversation could have various outcomes depending on our previous discussion about home, differing recollections or desires, or a person's mood that day. For Aunty B and Uncle C, it took some back-and-forth to articulate a desired change to the home, whereas others had a very clear idea about what they wanted to improve. This suggested that people had varying levels of conscious spatial engagement within their homes.

The nature of each imagined design was very different:

An expanded sunroom for hotpot with the whole family among the plants;

A more effective use of empty space for a sewing room in the master bedroom;

A “beach” with a sauna and hot tub in the unfinished basement;

A typological rearrangement from a split-level to a more popular two-storey building;

A more open and brighter space to connect the sunroom, dining room, and sitting room.

Several imagined changes had a very strong affinity for the past. Aunt A's fond memories of her childhood garden seemed to seep into her description of the plant-filled sunroom. Aunt B's multipurpose use of space in her childhood courtyard reappeared in her desire to reduce the wasted space in her bedroom. Uncle C's weekend visits to *Chek Chue* beach as a child manifested in our proposal to finish the basement as a subterranean getaway. Uncle E's first impression of Canada was how dark it was compared to Hong Kong; in his current home, he wished to improve his favourite space in the house, which was also the brightest space. Other proposed changes appeared to be definitive reactions to spending time in Hong Kong as a child; in his current home, Uncle D didn't wish to relinquish unused square footage, and in his childhood home he shared a single bedroom with his family of seven.

Imagining homes together brought memories of the past into dialogue with future desires. This process provided insight on what aspects of a home in Canada are valuable to individual diasporic people, moving towards a form of collaborative design informed by movement and memory.

On connections

The main themes that emerged from this engagement process reinforced previous contextual research:

On home as *roots*, family strongly influenced decisions to move to Canada. Family connections determined the location of home from China to Hong Kong, Hong Kong to Canada, and from city to city within Canada. Family businesses occupied parts of past homes and

determined spatial programming. The most significant space in each current home was always related to family or social gathering: the kitchen/living room was the most popular response shared by three people, and the sunroom was shared by the other two.⁵ While the study results are also influenced by activities enjoyed at a different stage of life, it's clear that home cannot be conceptualized independently of family.

On home as *otherness*, a few people brought up concepts of identity and race throughout our conversations. Uncle C remembered going to school in Toronto and feeling discriminated against because he was Chinese. Uncle E volunteered that although Canada was his home, he was proud of his Chinese identity. He also recounted social exclusion faced as a Chinese person in Canada, as well as loss of status compared to those still living in Hong Kong, despite coming to Canada for education purposes. The term "Hong Kong Canadian" sits in relation to other terms of identification like "mainland Chinese" and "Hong Konger," which are also broad terms carrying a distinct and exclusionary dimension, and connotations of identity dependent on migration.

Aunty B had a different experience, expressing that both Chinese and non-Chinese dancers often practise *yuan ji* at the mall. She saw Canada today as a place where "the cultures all blend together." Although many people living in Canada experience intense discrimination, particularly those of Chinese descent, Aunty B's perspective sheds light on the different perceptions that people have of Canada as migrants from a colonized region.

On home as *status*, each conversation revealed certain hierarchies of space related to suburban houses in Canada. Uncle D's vision to convert his split-level home into a more popular two-storey typology shows the importance of home as property and investment. Participants generally had an affinity for "open concept" spaces, such as the connection between the kitchen and living room, or the desire to remove walls to make the rooms feel larger and more open. Participants also had a clear affinity for greenery and nature when referring to homes in Canada, visible in Aunty A's drawings of the garden and Uncle E's photographs of the yard. The desire for open space and greenery can be seen as reactions to highly urban and dense Hong Kong contexts; or a reflection of ingrained values about space, ownership, and success made accessible through migration to Canada.

5 I expected most people to make changes to improve their favourite space in the house, but only Aunty A and Uncle E wanted to change things which directly related to their favourite space in the home, whereas the others addressed spaces which they felt were less purposeful.

Returning to the question of the diasporic home: what can we learn from it through this process of remembering and imagining? Did this research succeed in identifying elements of collective Hong Kong Canadian belonging? Certain key ideas did emerge:

Home upholds collective memory as one piece of a larger puzzle.

Home is embedded within transnational objects.

Home reflects what is familiar.

Home leaves space for possibility.

Home is found in transnational routines.

Home is purposeful space.

Home is not bounded by reality.

Home is vast, stretching beyond the walls of a single building.

Home is a suburban island.

Home is about survival, shared between multiple groups of people.

Home is an investment and a reaction to the past.

Home is in between national identities, and conscious of the West.

Home is more than enough in itself.

Home is shaped by its environment.

These conversations emphasized connections to family and transnational networks, and the familiarity found in elements of a past home. I was surprised by the density of each childhood home, and the similarities in lifestyle of each current home. However, the inhabitation of each home—use of space, significant objects, spatial layout—seemed unique to each person, rather than distinguishable as a collective. Although between these conversations there were shared values, common spaces of significance, and clear ties to the past, I do not believe I spoke with enough people to be able to draw conclusions on overarching Hong Kong Canadian spatial preferences without generalizing their experiences.

The value of this process is in looking beyond “objective” histories and institutional knowledge to learn from subjective stories of movement. These individual facets of diasporic knowledge deepened my understanding of Hong Kong Canadian home and identity.

On frictions

Throughout this document, I refer to my research methodology as collaborative and to these conversations as co-authored, but in doing so I acknowledge that my research bias is clearly visible in this project. I chose to feature a select few quotations out of hours of conversation, and their lack of context could change their interpretation; I altered the aesthetics of the drawings to distinguish between authors; I arranged the quotations and drawings in a specific sequence to tell the story of this project from my own perspective. While I curated and presented these plan drawings within the overall framework of this research, I believe that their creation through back-and-forth communication is a valid form of co-authorship. Through our remote working conditions, people sketched and remembered on their own time, without being influenced as they drew. Our drawings were created separately, but they came together through collaborative discussion.

At the beginning of the project, I had structured expectations as to how each conversation would progress; however, valid and interesting discussion also emerged through unexpected moments, such as resistance to certain steps of the process. As I spoke with people who were passionate, pragmatic, reluctant, nostalgic, or forgetful from one conversation to the next, my role fluctuated between that of a scribe, an inquisitive student, an amateur detective, a storyteller, and a designer. Although speaking to more people would have helped me draw out more conclusive similarities, I'm excited about the unique sensibilities and the depth of reflection we achieved in each conversation. While this project's impact on participants' lives is highly subjective, I've received positive feedback on having conversations about another place and time while we were isolated within our homes.

Reflecting on my exploration throughout this research, I've immensely enjoyed hearing about the world from other perspectives and learning how to foster open dialogue. These conversations made me aware of my own bias, expanding my understanding of home to include vast transnational networks; showing me how spaces are not always used as intended; training my sense of empathy to visualize connections that are not initially apparent; teaching me to let others draw to deepen our discussion; and helping me understand how these words and drawings carry multiple interpretations. In my own practice as a designer, I aspire to use this knowledge to become a better listener.

To diasporic homes

6 Nishat Awan, *Diasporic Agencies: Mapping the City Otherwise*, 1st edition (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2016), 119.

In concluding this research I am reminded of how Nishat Awan refers to diasporic mapping as a process through which migrants negotiate agency in space:

It is a way of mapping that might not always be oppositional but is still able to contain political possibilities. This way of thinking and doing also sits well within a diasporic sensibility, which rather than attempting open confrontations, ones that have had a long history of failure, looks for subtle subversions based in practices of mimicry and marginality... Above all in the practice of mapping otherwise, experience is reintroduced as a way of exploring different futures by giving voice to other narratives and uses of space.⁶

Awan writes on mapping “otherwise” as a cultural act that is often used by diasporic peoples as a repository of memory, and differs from dominant processes recorded by institutions. Conversations on otherwise uses of space are acts of cultural agency; this research upholds that international and intergenerational communication is key to exploring diverse modes of spatial belonging, to envision a built environment that celebrates the diverse and diasporic people who inhabit it.

As otherwise histories

These five homes weave in and out through historic events and typological trends. They are inherently political through their nature as Hong Kong Canadian homes: homes that have historically been prohibited, razed, and marginalized within the GTA, yet have significantly shaped its urban development. Each story documented here connects to a larger network of collective movement embedded in the built environment.

Like the collective memory databases that compile stories about architecture, this process generates knowledge about diasporic belonging embedded in space as a valid form of architectural history. Jamrozik and Kempster’s *Growing up Modern* project described the importance of documenting the inhabitation of famous residential architecture to accurately position them within historical narratives. Exploring the potential of this methodology, this project calls for architectural disciplines and discourse to value buildings that are culturally significant as architecturally significant—regardless of whether they are designed by famous architects.

This research finds importance in architecture related to migration: this includes stories about living in *tong lau* buildings in Hong Kong, most of which are now demolished and one of which now carries heritage status; diverse inhabitations that celebrate difference within the sameness of the Western suburban ideal; ethnic malls as landing points for immigrants to establish themselves while finding familiarity in Canada. These everyday places form networks of home, as important sites of memory that contribute to transnational home and belonging. By making space for other narratives, this research contributes to a growing area of diasporic knowledge at the margins of Canada's architectural history.

These narratives question dominant colonial systems of value which determine what is or isn't a significant place or building. Why isn't the ethnic mall considered cultural heritage if it resonates with transnational identities? To document the built environment more comprehensively, we need to foreground other perspectives on diasporic networks of home. In this way, the "otherness" that excludes people from dominant groups contributes to "otherwise" histories told by diasporic people, as valid modes of remembering and learning about one another.

As otherwise futures

The process of positioning diasporic homes holds value for architects as an effective way of communicating spatial belonging. Throughout each conversation, back-and-forth revisions made clear the lack of understanding that I—a supposed spatial expert—had of a different generation, culture, and place. Participatory ethnographic research is crucial to reveal what architectural training may obscure: spatial use is different for people who do not share the same life experiences or cultural backgrounds. Why not have a sewing room in the bedroom? Beyond consultation processes, Canadian architectural practice needs to celebrate global influences in design to not only understand other histories, but to legitimize diasporic stories as spatial guidelines to mediate architects' cultural biases.

This research advocates for the use of architectural processes which draw from the immense bodies of knowledge that exist outside institutional spaces, with the hope of imagining a built environment reflective of the many diverse groups of people who call Canada home. As designers of this environment, we have a responsibility to engage with its complex diasporic history.

Throughout the past year and a half, I circled through variations of a “research question” to clarify the purpose of this project. What can firsthand stories contribute to our understanding of history as it affects the built environment? How can we better represent Hong Kong Canadian spatial identity within documentations of home and architecture? Is it even possible to trace Hong Kong Canadian spatial identity without homogenising unique narratives?

I believe that this methodology holds potential to further amplify Chinese-Canadian narratives. Asking questions that focus on specific buildings or room layouts in the public or private realm could draw out more intense experiences of collective memory. Reaching out to more people could produce a more robust set of data to express multiple perspectives on a single home. Experimenting with forms of collaborative drawing could create more expressive visualizations. Testing out different formats for this research, such as community storytelling and drawing workshops could make this process more intergenerationally accessible.

However, the open-ended question I address within this document expresses the potential of this methodology to embrace the tangents and unexpected topics that emerge throughout a conversation: what can architects learn about transnational belonging through how people remember, inhabit, and imagine their homes?

The success of this research is a broad but necessary first step for further initiatives to explore how diasporic knowledge can change dominant understandings of the past and expressions of the future. Within and beyond the Hong Kong Canadian diaspora, are there qualities of belonging that are universal, without being exclusionary? How can a spatial syntax of belonging be addressed through design, from the scale of a room to that of a city? I imagine the following directions as potential applications for this research methodology:

1. To build an archive of collective knowledge that amplifies transnational voices through experiences of the built environment. Focusing on diasporic groups, this methodology presents an opportunity to document overlooked areas of transnational importance within public memory. With a larger public outreach, an engagement project using co-authored representation techniques would better mediate between dominant and marginalized groups in recording the built environment. This would contribute to a public memory database that could continue to grow through future engagement.

2. To design housing that is better suited to migrants' diverse lifestyles in Canada. Working with people to compare contexts of home would generate more sensitive design work, whether designing private housing specific to each person or public housing with the flexibility to accommodate people of many different cultural backgrounds. Incorporating memory and feeling into design consultation processes would lead to not only co-authored representation, but forms of collaborative and co-authored design.

Accounting for memory and movement in the built environment, this research moves towards a process for generating knowledge to centre people as experts on their own homes. Home is an entry point into the growing field of research at the convergence of architectural history, migration studies, and participatory design. By positioning transnational homes within Canadian architectural discourse, I believe there is potential to bring together vastly different worlds in the places we collectively call home.

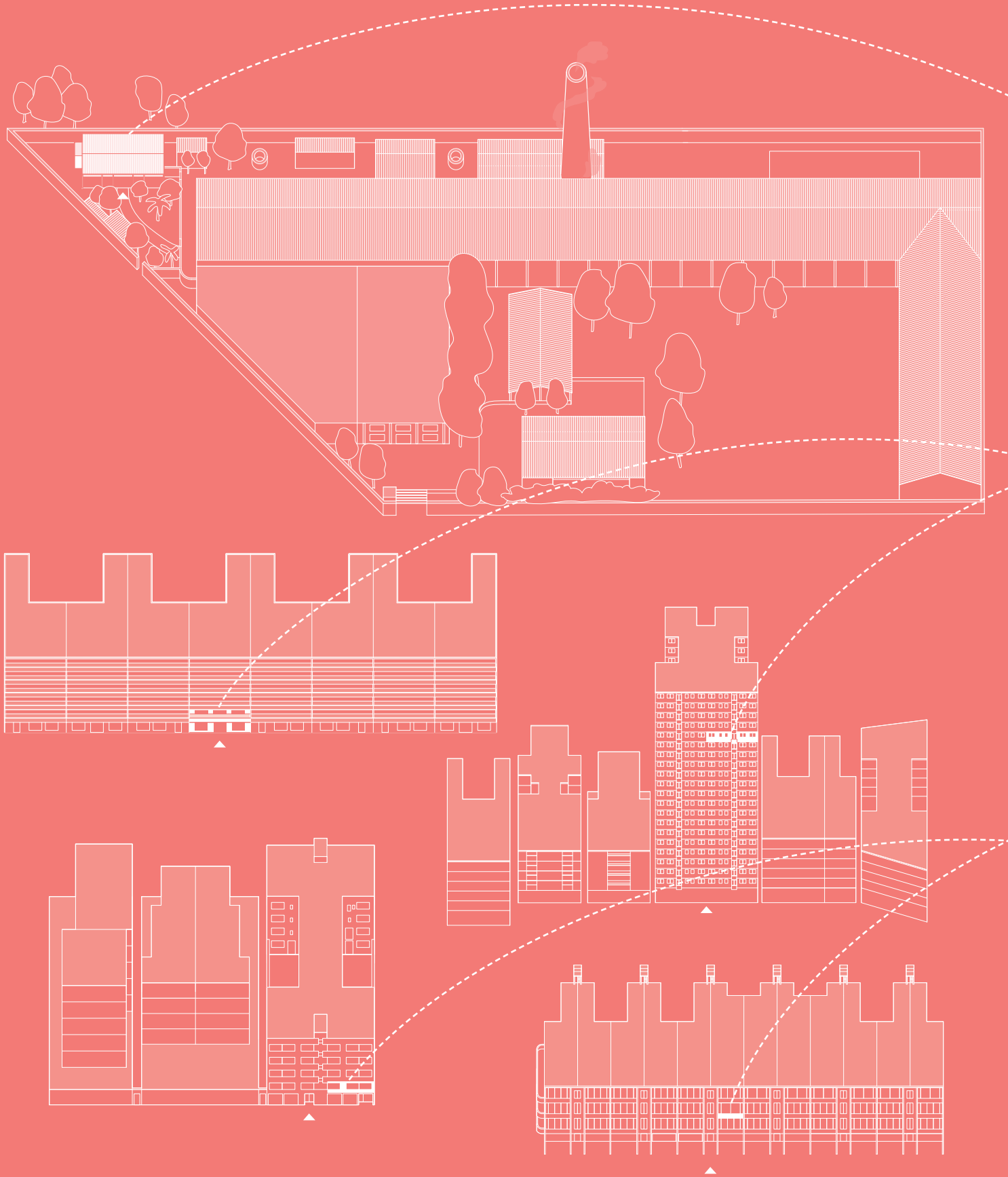


Fig. 3.2 *Hong Kong to Canada*, image by author.



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Appendix

Additional information that didn't find a place within the main body of this document.

Call for participants

A Home Then, A Home Now: Drawing Past and Present Homes of Hong Kongers in Canada

Seeking Participants

How does your current home compare to the home you grew up in? As part of my Master's thesis in Architecture at the University of Waterloo, I would like to hear about your experiences of home. For this research project, I am looking for participants currently living in the Greater Toronto Area who grew up in Hong Kong and moved to Canada between 1955-1975.

The purpose of this study is to develop a process for recording and understanding the experiences of Hong Kongers who have migrated to Canada through the architecture of home. This process will help participants tell migration stories through drawings, while preparing architects to learn to listen as a basis for design.

Part 1: Survey

Participation involves completing a survey about your memories of your childhood home in Hong Kong and your current home in the Greater Toronto Area. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Part 2: Drawing your home

Should you decide to continue further with the study, your participation would involve 3-5 one-on-one phone interviews at your convenience, each of which is approximately 60 minutes:

1. Let's talk on the phone. What do you remember most about your childhood home? What is the most important space in your current home? I encourage you to email me photographs or drawings you make of each home. Based on your information, I will use historic and digital databases to draw a floor plan of each home.
2. I will send my floor plan drawings to you after each phone call and ask you to review and correct the floor plans.
3. Once you decide that the floor plans are complete, you will have the option to propose an imaginary design change to your current home based on our previous conversations.

At the end of the study, I will send you the floor plans of each home that we have created. By drawing these plans and potentially imagining a design change, I hope we will create a tool for telling stories through architecture, and that architects can learn to understand architectural history and memory through conversation.

Eligibility

Participants moved from Hong Kong to Canada between 1955-1975.

Participants currently reside in the Greater Toronto Area.

Participants can communicate in either English or Cantonese.

The decision to participate is yours. If you are interested in participating, please complete the survey at the link provided here: (survey link). For more information, please visit (website URL). If you have any questions, please email me at nkopp@uwaterloo.ca.

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee.

Survey responses

*For this study, Aunty F participated in the survey, but not in the home-drawing portion of the project.

What is your most significant memory of your childhood home in Hong Kong?

Aunty A

It was just a bungalow at the corner of the laundry business buildings. Most significant was the space I was free to roam.... especially the gardens.

Aunty B

It was quite well built since it survived a lot of abuse from typhoon seasons.

Uncle C

We have hot water heater for bathroom, not too many people have that back than. Also we can see the racetrack on our balcony.

Uncle D

Small area per capita. Sharing same apartment with others who rent a room.

Uncle E

Crowded, nice neighborhood, 200 Prince Edward rd, second floor. Water shortage and limited running water.

Aunty F*

A small room with bunk beds and a chair.

What year did you leave Hong Kong, and why did you leave?

Left Hong Kong in 1960. To finish high school in a convent school in England. Aunty A

I left Hong Kong in 1967, looking for a better opportunity in education and career. Aunty B

In 1970, I think my parents wanted to move because they wanted a new life for the family. Also school is much better here. Uncle C

1972. Reason for education. Uncle D

1964 Uncle E

1958 with my mother to join my father who emigrated to Canada with my grandfather when I was 1 year old Aunty F

Where do you enjoy spending time in your current home?

- Aunty A Love to sit in the dinning room looking at the huge backyard with only coneflower and the monster walnut tree.
- Aunty B Kitchen, family room, balcony and garden. It gives me joy to have a family and social gatherings, kitchen is the popular spot. I enjoy cooking and foods. Family room is for my relaxation. It is refreshing spending time in my balcony and doing gardening outside in the summer.
- Uncle C Living room, and kitchen. I enjoy cooking and relaxing in the living room.
- Uncle D Kitchen. Preparing meals that we enjoy.
- Uncle E Golf course development. 2 acres of tree trees and privacy.
- Aunty F Living room because it is bright, with a huge window looking out to the street.

What objects did you bring with you when you came to Canada?

Just clothes in a big trunk. a portable typewriter! And a stuffed toy lion..... Hamlet. It was my pajama bag! Aunty A

Daily essentials, such as clothes, shoes and books. Aunty B

Don't really remember. Uncle C

Personal belongings. Uncle D

Very little luggage. Uncle E

Clothes & a bag of toys. Aunty F

What is the biggest difference between living in Hong Kong and living in Canada?

- Aunty A The space! In Hong Kong we were surrounded by four story high buildings. Everyone could look into our garden with fruit trees.
- Aunty B The environment in Canada is much superior than Hong Kong. Hong Kong is polluted with noise and dust.
- Uncle C Size of living space, the apartment we have in Hong Kong is about 600 sq ft. With 2 bedrooms (for the 5 of us) Which is considered being good size. Now we have a bungalow with about 1800 sq ft. (Just the 2 of us).
- Uncle D Space and quiet neighbourhood.
- Uncle E Population. Culture. We lived north of Burlington in the country on 7 acres for 30 years before retiring in Ottawa. Toronto downtown is more like Hong Kong but we never liked it. My wife and I grew up in Montreal near Mount Royal park so we always enjoyed being outdoors. Canadians are very outdoorsy and we've done lots of camping and RV stuff.
- Aunty F More open space & greenery, less concrete high rise buildings.

Do you consider Canada as your home?

Yes, I had been here since 1962. My home in Hong Kong had been replaced by high rise apartment buildings. Aunty A

Yes. Aunty B

Yes, we grew up here and love the lifestyle. It's like you can go biking, jogging and track in the woods and even just get in the car and go camping or fishing. Life is good here. Uncle C

Yes. Uncle D

Yes I'm proud of being Canadian but I'm also very proud of China and our heritage. Uncle E

Yes. Aunty F

In conversation with

Aunty G *

*For this study, Aunty G participated in drawing a past home, but not a present home. I've included her drawings and photographs of her home in Hong Kong as part of the appendix to this project.

On the stairwell



Fig. G.1 *Side view*, image by Aunty G.

“This is the concrete back stairs that I used to play in by myself. This picture is the end unit. Ours was in the middle of the block. The whole block was built with the same plan, except the end units had balconies.”

Fig. G.2 200 Prince Edward Road,
image by Aunty G.

“I don’t think the Bird Street was
created at that time. I don’t remember
hearing birds singing at all, just the
sound of the train crossing the bridge on
Prince Edward Road.”

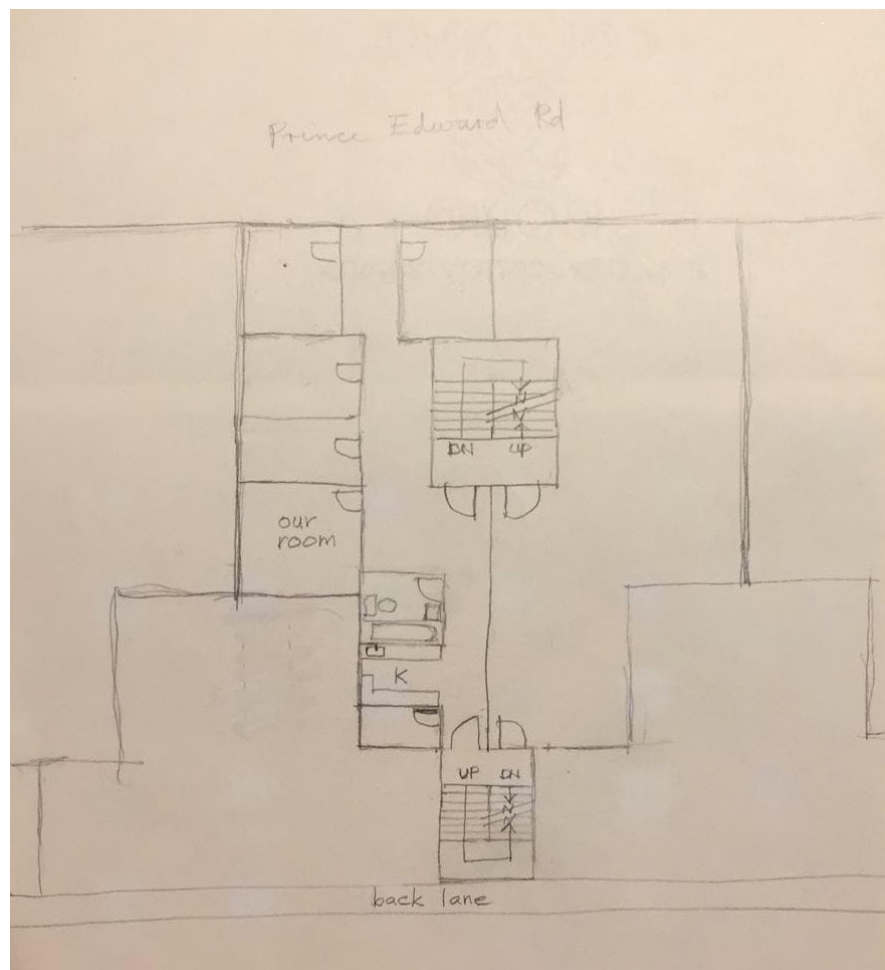




Fig. G.3 *Front façade*, image by Aunty G.

“Our apartment is on the 3rd floor. The one above the lighted window with a phone. The front façade had been renovated after the buildings were declared as historical buildings by the Hong Kong government. It was not as nice as it is now.”

Fig. G.4 *Front entry*, image by Aunty G.

“This is the typical front entrance stairs from the street.”

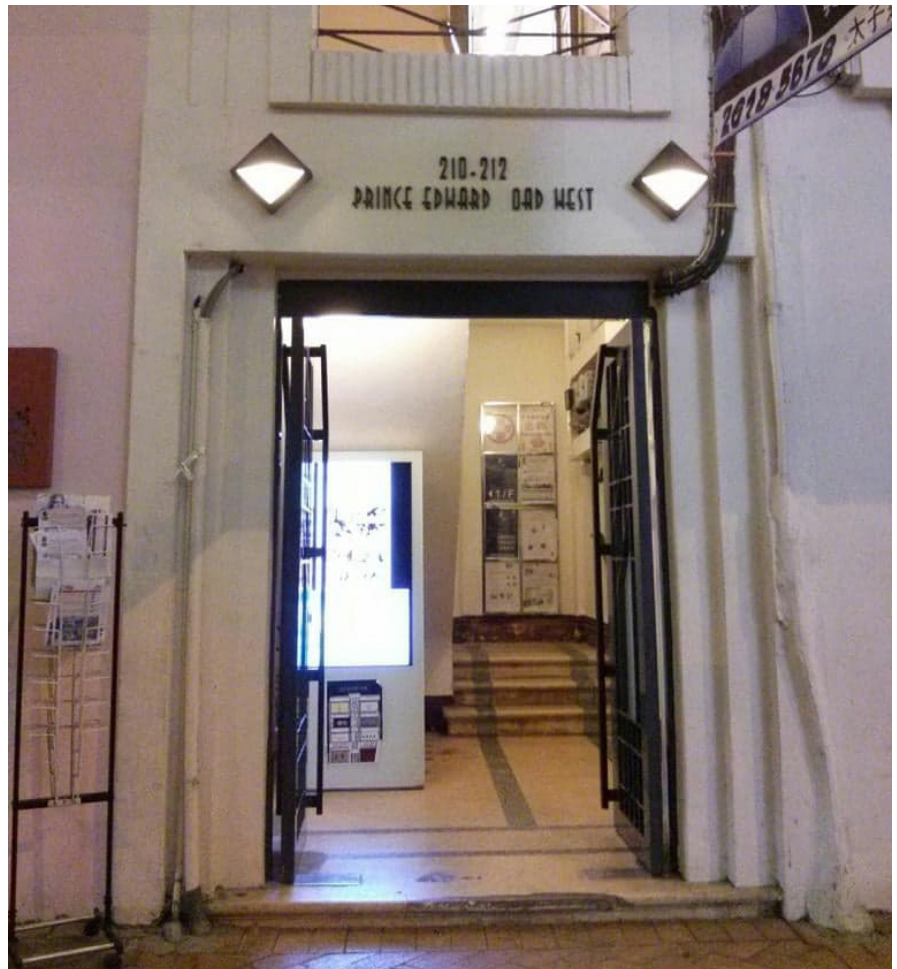




Fig. G.5 *Back stair*, image by Aunty G.

“Every pair of units shares one set of front and back stairs. I think the front stairs were 4 feet wide and the back stairs were 3 feet wide.”

Fig. G.6 *Back stair perspective*, image by author.



