

**John Rylands Research Institute and Library
Next Chapter project**

Listed Building Consent Application
Exhibition Design Concept - Indicative design
June 2023

**Nissen
Richards**



Introduction

We are seeking to create an engaging environment with elegant displays, enhanced within the historic setting and supporting Ryland's collection.

Our approach is to introduce elements that work with the Grade I-listed building in a subtle yet contemporary way, using materials that complement and highlight the distinct character of the building. The new gallery designs are seeking to showcase John Ryland's superlative collection, as well as the neo-Gothic architecture (with elements of the Arts and Crafts movement) and scale of the rooms, whilst at the same time ensuring visitors enjoy an optimised viewing experience of the artifacts on display.

The material palette we are reviewing for the showcases and furniture has a natural patina, grain, and texture to ensure it feels appropriate and timeless in the setting of the gallery. The material selected are aged brass, high grade timbers such as European Oak, solid surface material with a grain pattern and a honed finish echoing the tones of the surrounding stone masonry as well as a range of soft fabric surrounds for the key books and other sensitive object display.

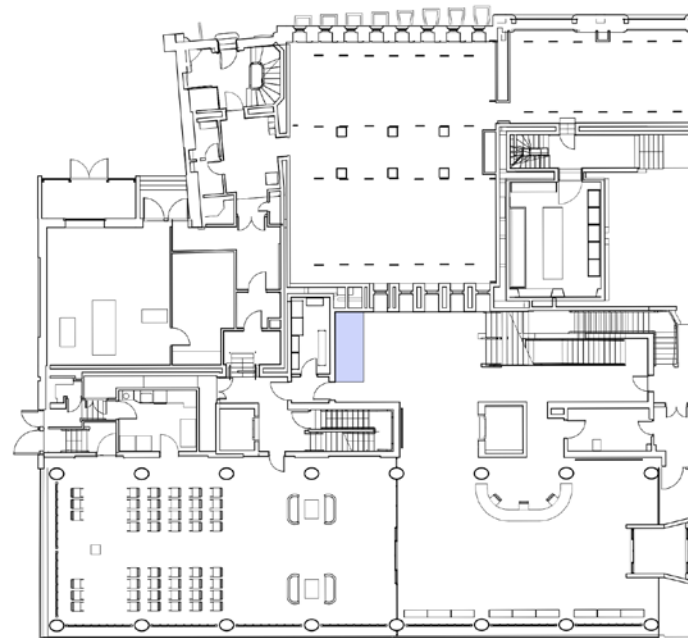
The palette creates a consistency across the galleries and display elements but shifts in materials in relation to the dominant existing materials present in each space.

We are keen to introduce subtle ribbing detail to the base design of the showcases and the sides of the desk cases which also echoes the ornate ribbing detailing present across the buildings, from fluting in timber panels to carvings in stonework and ribbing in metalwork. This will ensure the new elements complement the existing architectural details and feel in keeping with the historic setting.

Ground Floor Plan

Current furniture layouts within the ground floor space

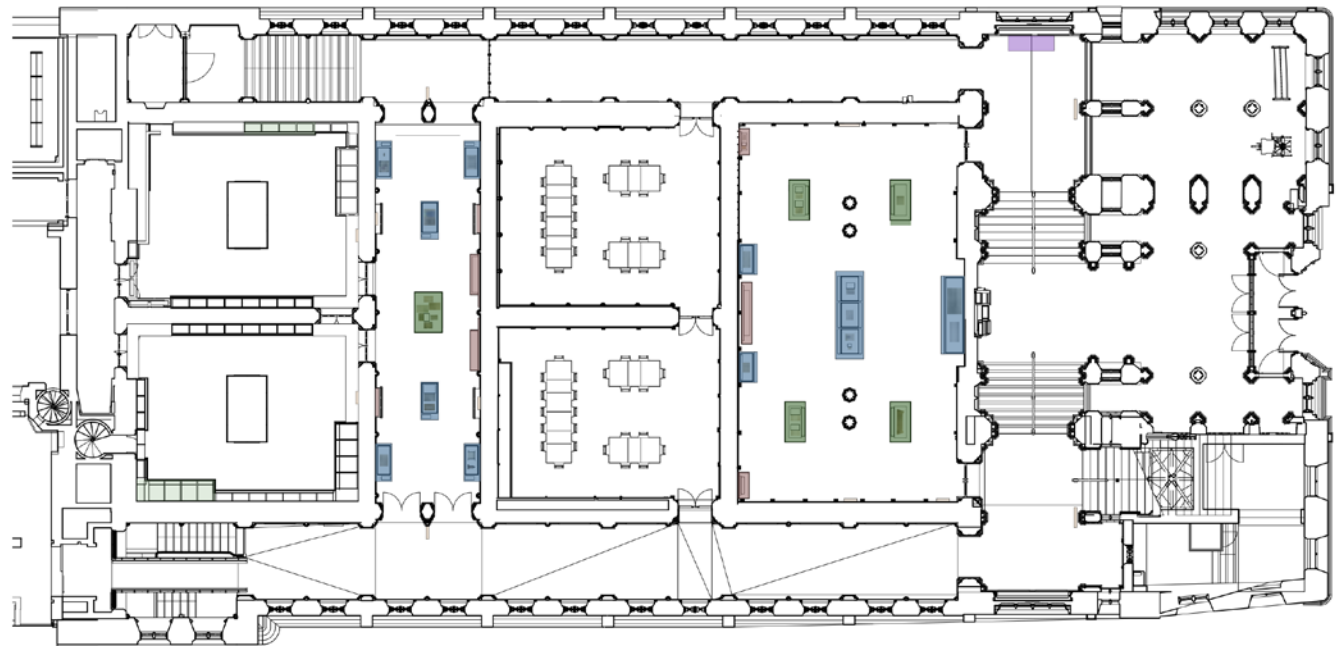
- Table Showcase
- Freestanding High Level Showcase
- Wall Vitrine
- Interpretation
- Plinth
- Bench
- Repurposed Showcase



First Historic Floor Plan

Current furniture layouts within the first floor space

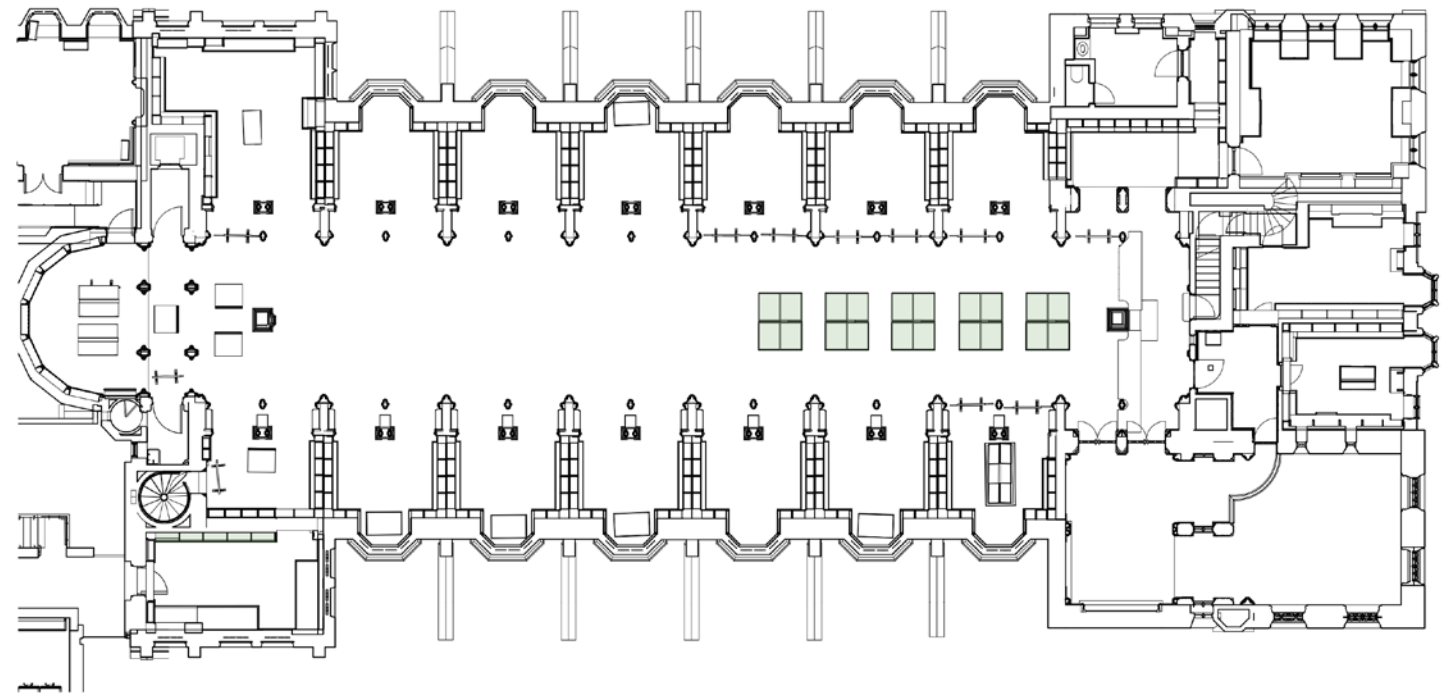
-  Table Showcase
-  Freestanding High Level Showcase
-  Wall Vitrine
-  Interpretation
-  Plinth
-  Bench
-  Repurposed Showcase



Second Historic Floor Plan

Current furniture layouts within the second floor space

- Table Showcase
- Freestanding High Level Showcase
- Wall Vitrine
- Interpretation
- Plinth
- Bench
- Repurposed Showcase



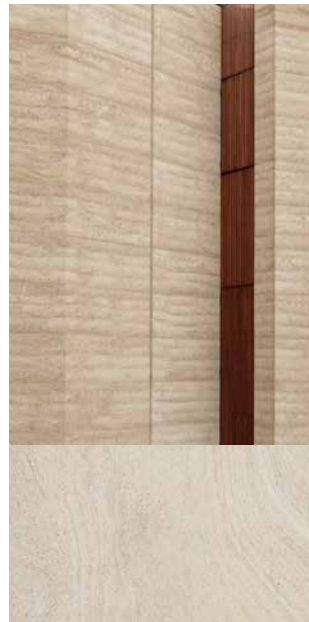
Suggested Material Palette

Extracting stone and timber elements, and considering how these could be paired with complementary contemporary materials.



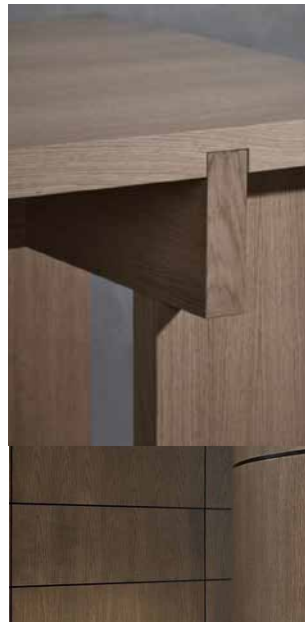
Metal

Varied patina textures responding to the existing bronze and blackened metal details



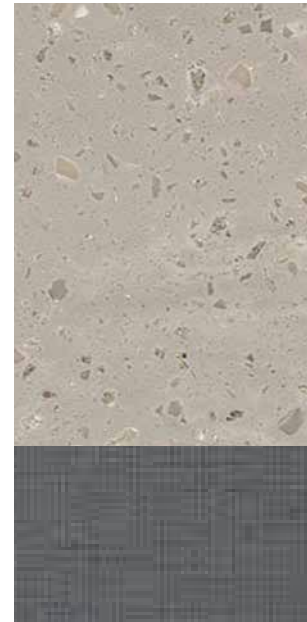
Stone / Solid Surface

Light stone insertions ground themselves within the historic stone building and echo the existing stone palette



Timber

Craftsmanship quality of timber cases reinterpreting the existing timber panelling



Tactile insertions

Fabric and solid surface inserts creating layers of texture



Traces of Colour

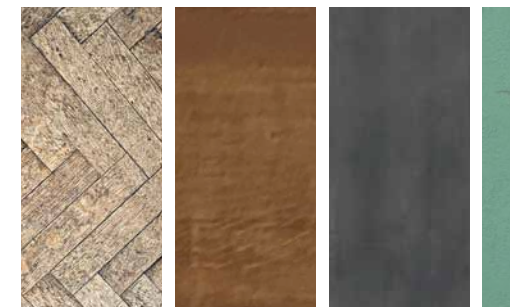
Apertures created with backpainted glass

Material Tests | Material Inverse

Timber and stone feature in all rooms however timber is most prevalent in the Temporary and Spencer/Crawford spaces, and stone in the permanent. We are proposing to invert the material approach for the showcases in these spaces.



Permanent Room Existing Textures



Temporary & Spencer/Crawford Rooms Existing Textures

Proposed Complementary Textures



Proposed Complementary Textures



Detail Tests | Historic References

Referring to the existing stone and timber fluting details and proposing a new subtle complementary detail.



Fluting & Detail | Profiles



Fluting & Detail | Elevations



Interior Details

Detail Tests | Historic References

Chamfer and frame details extracting architectural profiles from the existing architecture



Detail Tests | Approach to Display

Case detailing for treasures display



Solid Plinths with angled pulpit display



Slender metal support with angled pulpit display

Previous showcase Precedents

Bespoke design respecting room proportions and datums and maintaining clear sightlines with non reflective glazed cases with solid bases.



The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House



National Portrait Gallery

Space 3 and Space 4 | Permanent Exhibition and Temporary Exhibition

Introduction:

The design seeks to display the collection in optimum viewing conditions as well as celebrate the existing architecture of the spaces.

We are proposing to reinstate symmetry and hindered vistas in the permanent and temporary gallery by careful design and placement of bespoke showcases in the space. The proposals key into existing datums and proportions of the room to create clarity. The bespoke design of the cases will ensure that the sense of the room is maintained as well as clear long vistas with the use of non-reflective glass.

The showcases in the Galleries have been designed as generally freestanding to avoid substantial wall fixings. Several fixings will be required for restraints to the tall vitrine cases (which are being designed as floor mounted) along the perimeter as well as minimal fixings for wall interpretation panels. These would be through mortar joints where possible. These are essential to ensure sufficient display area is available as well as different display solutions (vertical mounting, desk mounting, shelves, sculpture, and object plinths) to ensure the gallery can showcase the treasures of the Rylands in an optimum manner.

To ensure successful lighting of the highly sensitive collection, and to avoid track lighting which would cause significant disruption to the existing fabric, the exhibits will be internally lit throughout with incase lighting.

The design ensures that minimal floor boxes are required and where possible the cases have been grouped so that a reduced number is required. We are also ensuring that all the existing power and data at skirting level is used and are avoiding the requirement for new skirting power and data points.

The large arched stained-glass windows are currently fully concealed behind thick black out curtains. The proposal is to replace these curtains with a new scrim layer that filters light in to achieve suitable levels of lighting for the sensitive material, whilst also allowing for the some of the architectural splendour of the windows to be perceptible.

The intention will be to test different levels of scrim weave openness and colour to ensure we can achieve even lighting between the South and North facing windows. These proposals will be transformational in reinstating the original architectural elements of these spaces. The existing fixing points of the curtain tracks will be reused for the fixing of the scrim frame structure.

Space 3 | Permanent Exhibition

Introduction to Rylands and the collection. New showcases and interpretation within this location.



The Space

We will consider the layout of the showcases and interpretation to begin the visitor journey, and consider ways to draw the visitor into this initial space.

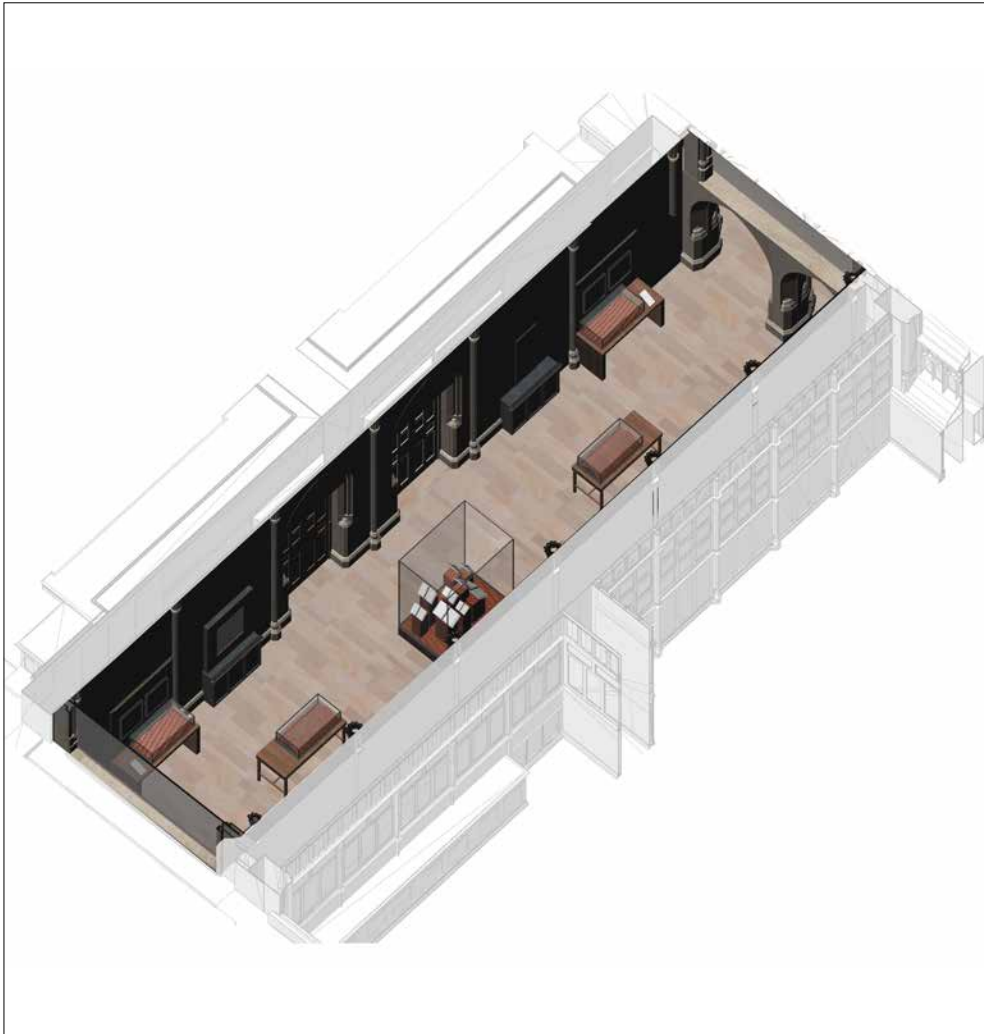
Indicative concept layout

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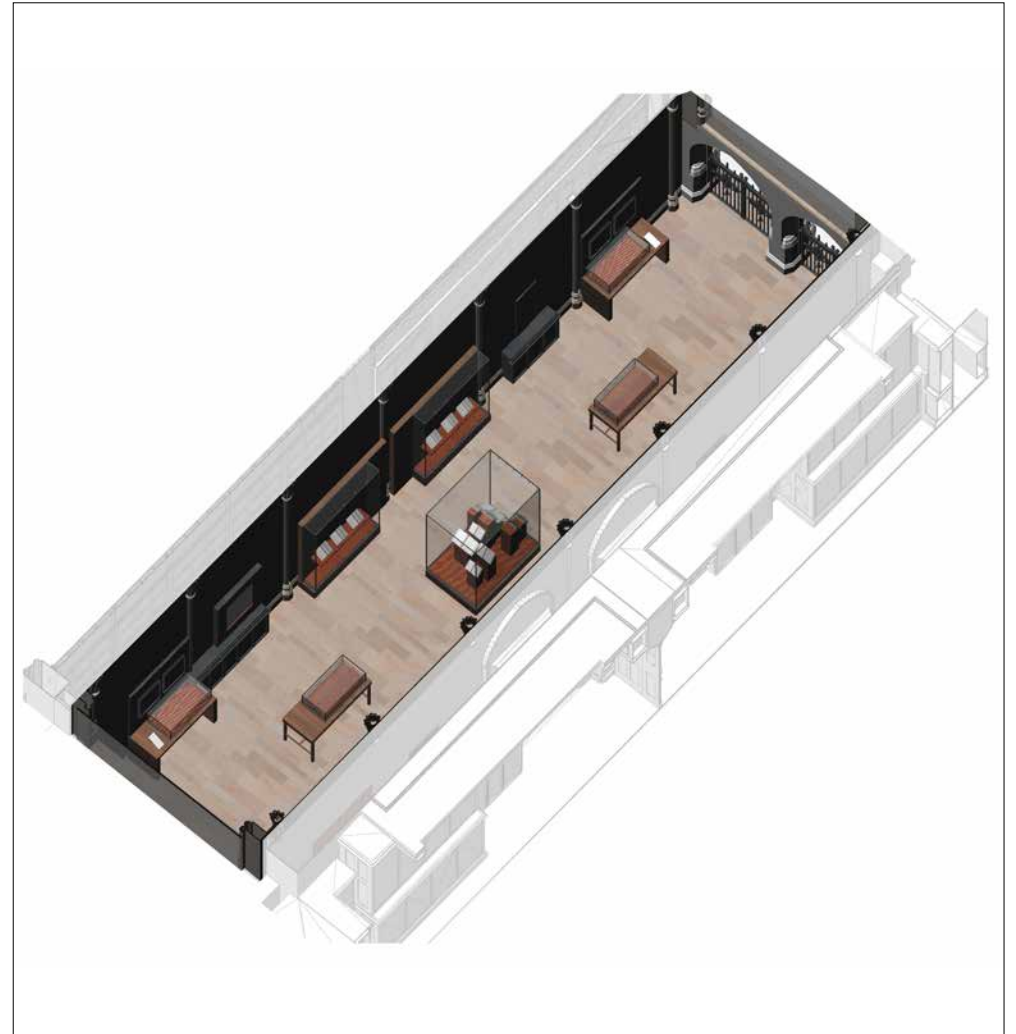
John Rylands Research Institute and Library - Next Chapter project

Family of Furniture | Permanent - Axonometric

Axo | Layout Option View 1



Axo | Layout Option View 2

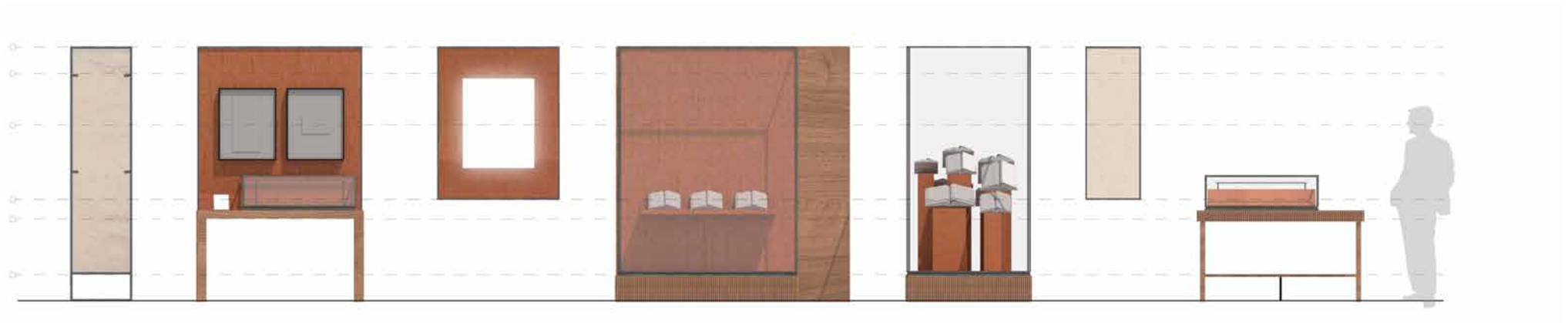


Family of Furniture | Permanent - Internal View



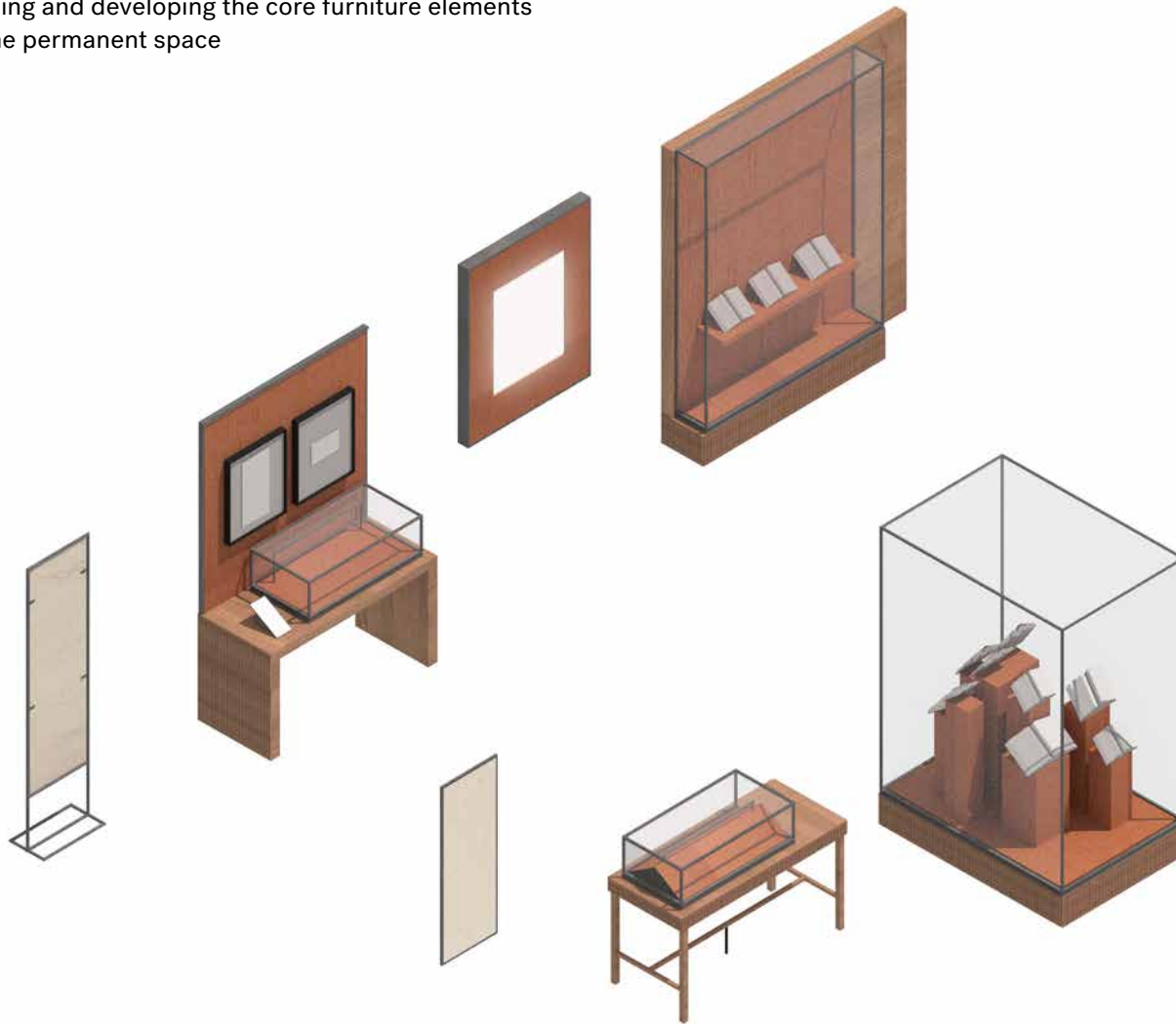
Family of Furniture | Permanent Display

Refining and developing the core furniture elements
for the permanent space



Family of Furniture | Permanent - Look and Feel

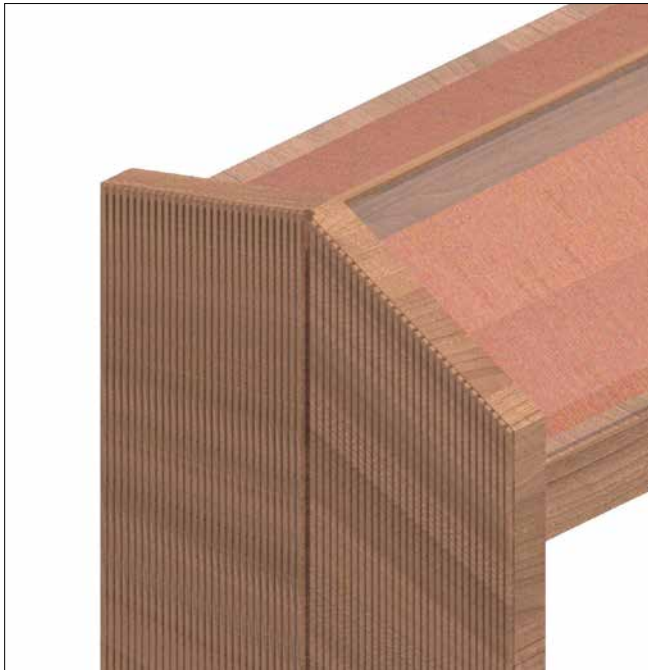
Refining and developing the core furniture elements
for the permanent space



Family of Furniture | Permanent - In Detail

Table details - In focus

1.



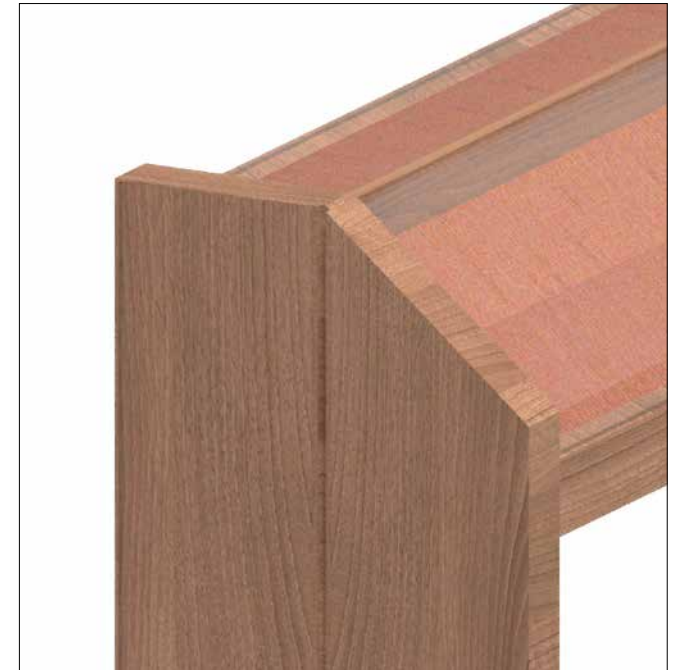
Chamfered detail across length of table base side

2.



Chamfered detail on edges of table base side

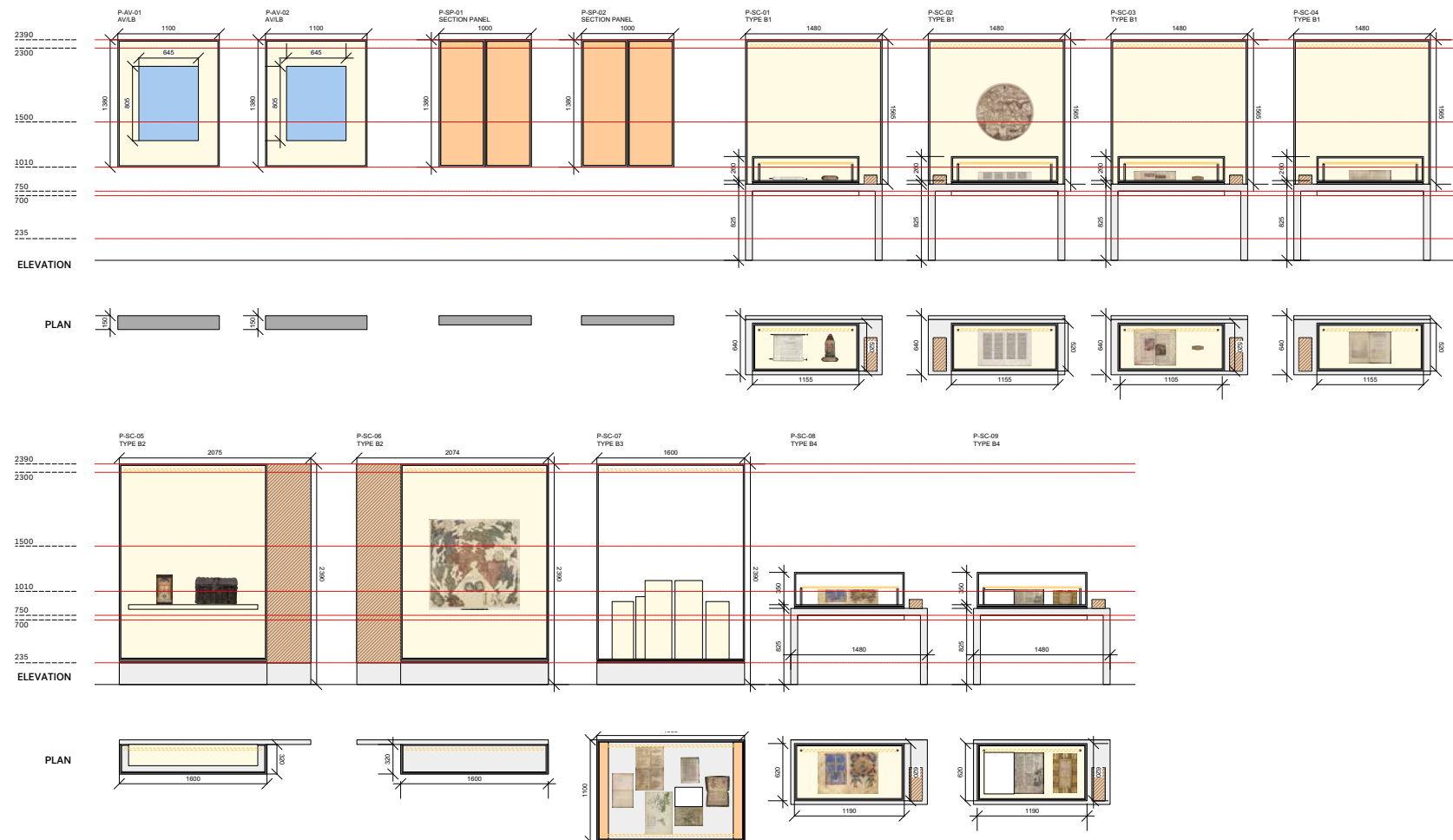
3.



No base detail

Family of Furniture | Permanent - Indicative Schedule

Indicative showcase family considering existing Architectural datums.



Space 4 | Temporary Exhibition

New showcases and interpretation within this location



The Space

We will consider the layout of the room that clarifies the spaces and reinstated the hindered vistas. This can be future-proofed for a range of exhibits and display material.



Cases

We will develop a family of furniture which is flexible. Mounts/inserts/labels should be easily replaced with a flexible design system.

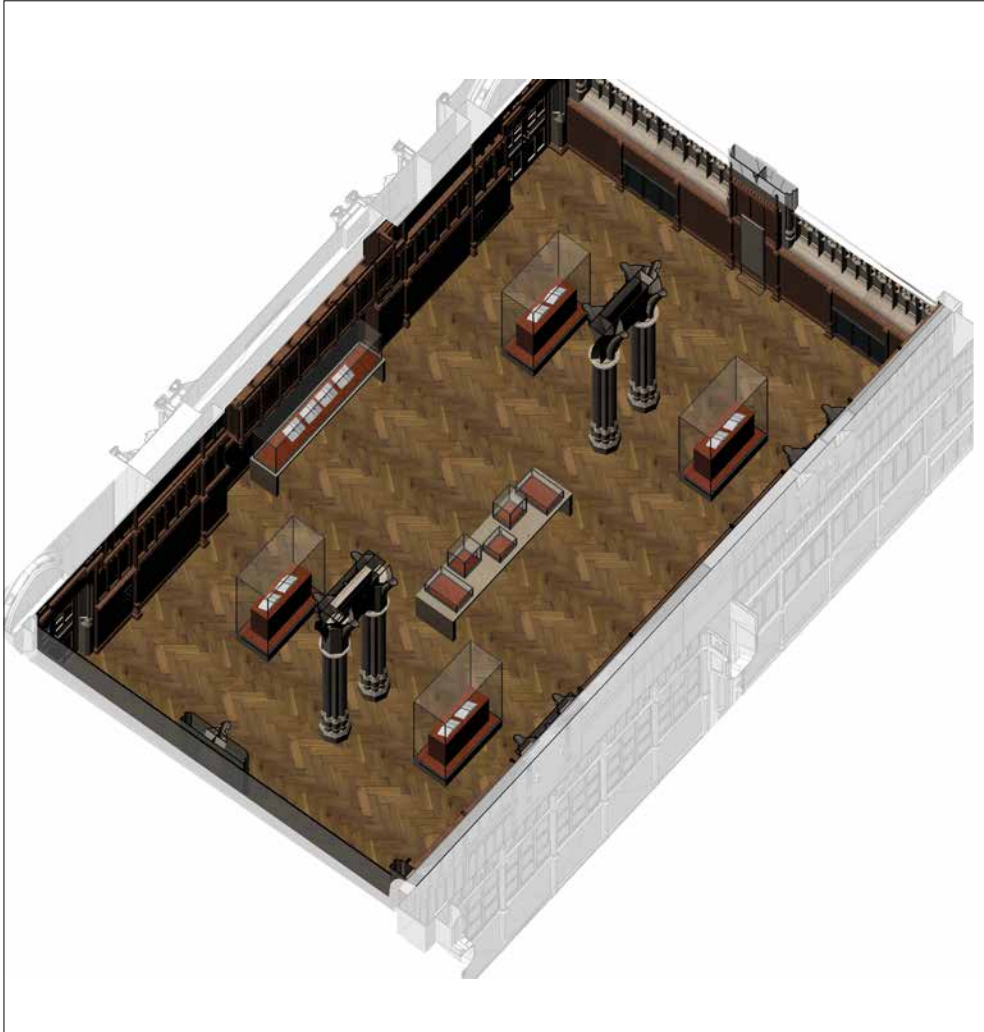
Indicative concept layout

-
- This architectural floor plan depicts a large, rectangular hall with a central aisle and various furniture pieces. The plan includes the following elements:
- Central Aisle:** A wide central aisle runs vertically through the middle of the hall, marked by a red line. It features four circular light fixtures.
 - Central Furniture:** A large yellow rectangular unit, possibly a reception desk or a large cabinet, is positioned in the center of the aisle. It has a width of 100 and a height of 140. Below it, a smaller yellow unit with a width of 100 and a height of 40 is also centered.
 - Side Furniture:**
 - Left Side:** Along the left wall, there are three blue rectangular units (width 100, height 40) and two green rectangular units (width 100, height 40). A large green rectangular unit (width 100, height 140) is also located on the left side.
 - Right Side:** Along the right wall, there are two green rectangular units (width 100, height 40) and one blue rectangular unit (width 100, height 40). A large green rectangular unit (width 100, height 140) is also located on the right side.
 - Dimensions:** The overall width of the hall is 100. The overall height is 140. The central aisle is 100 wide. The yellow units are 100 wide and 140 high. The green units are 100 wide and 40 high. The blue units are 100 wide and 40 high.
 - Entrances:** There are four entrances, one on each side of the hall, marked by red lines and labeled "ENTRANCE".

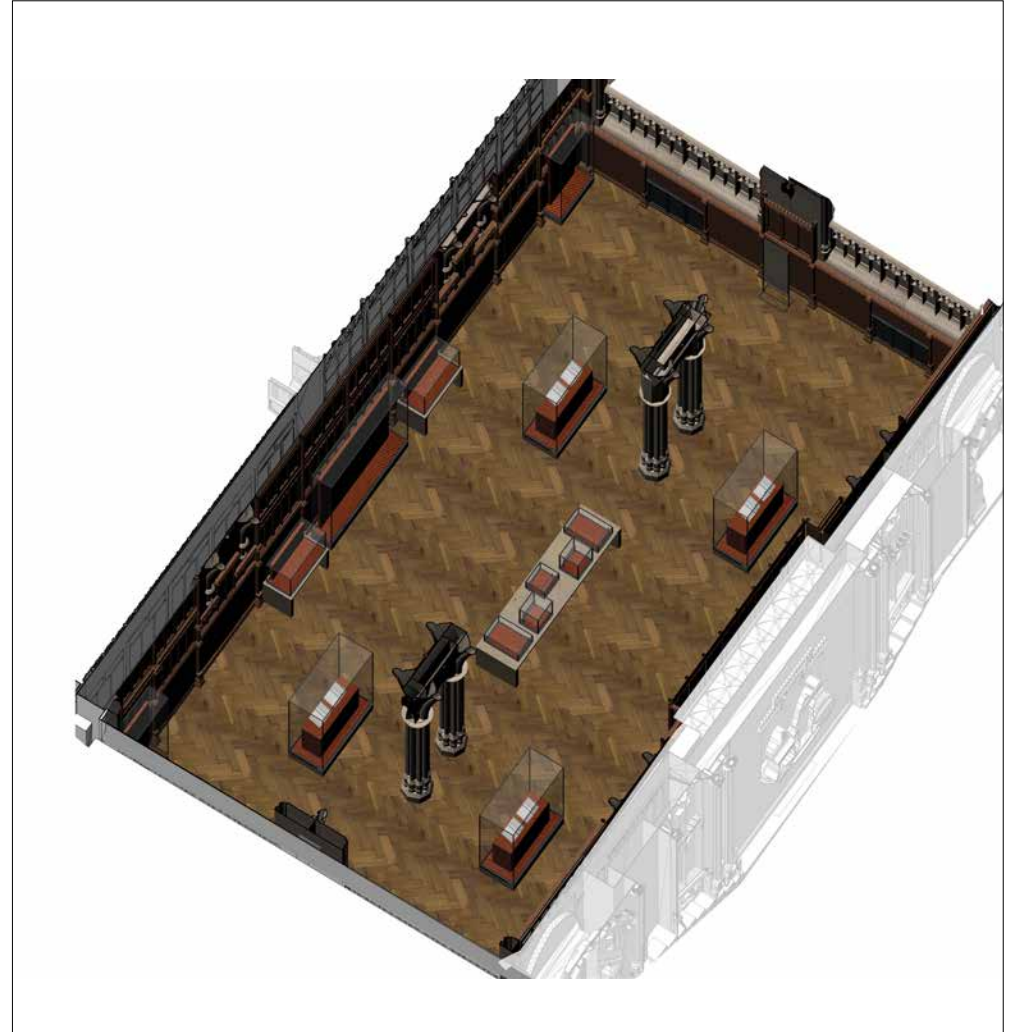
John Rylands Research Institute and Library - Next Chapter project

Family of Furniture | Temporary - Axonometric

Axo | Layout Option View 1



Axo | Layout Option View 2

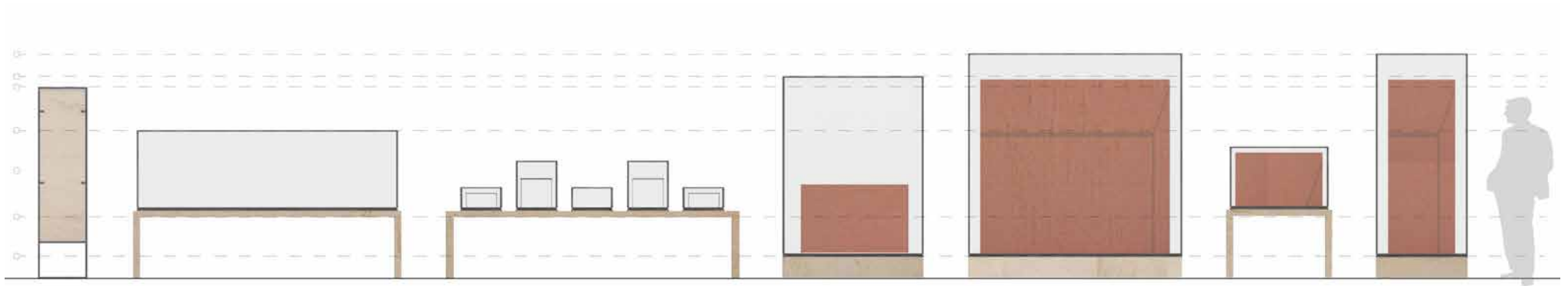


Family of Furniture | Temporary - Internal View



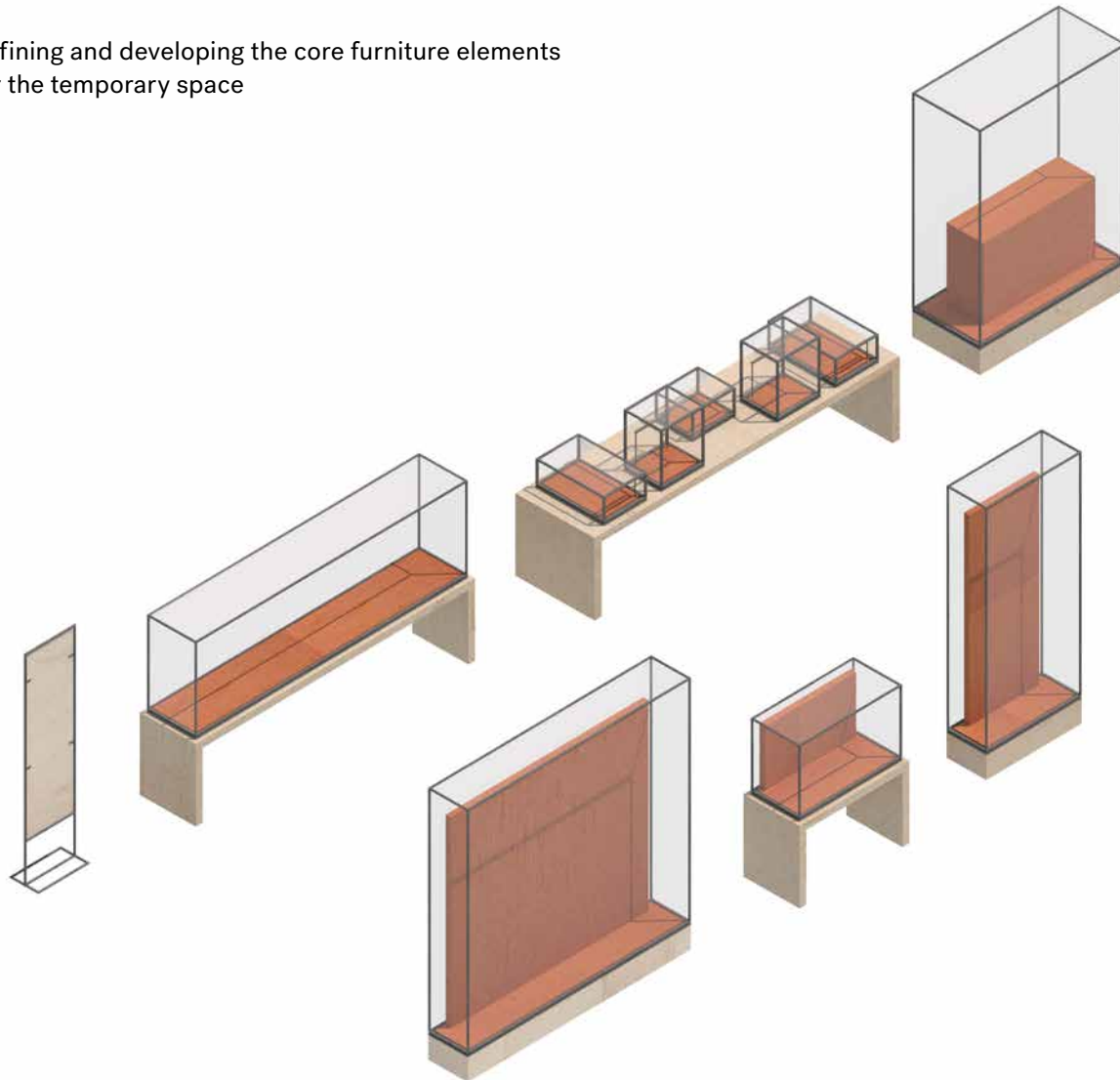
Family of Furniture | Temporary - Display

Refining and developing the core furniture elements
for the temporary space



Family of Furniture | Temporary - Look and Feel

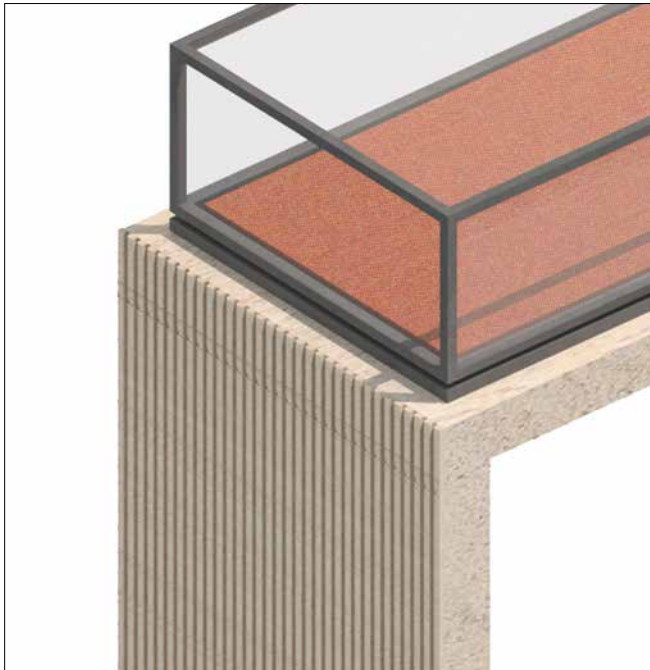
Refining and developing the core furniture elements
for the temporary space



Family of Furniture | Temporary - In Detail

Table details - In focus

1.



Chamfered detail across length of table base side

2.



Chamfered detail on edges of table base side

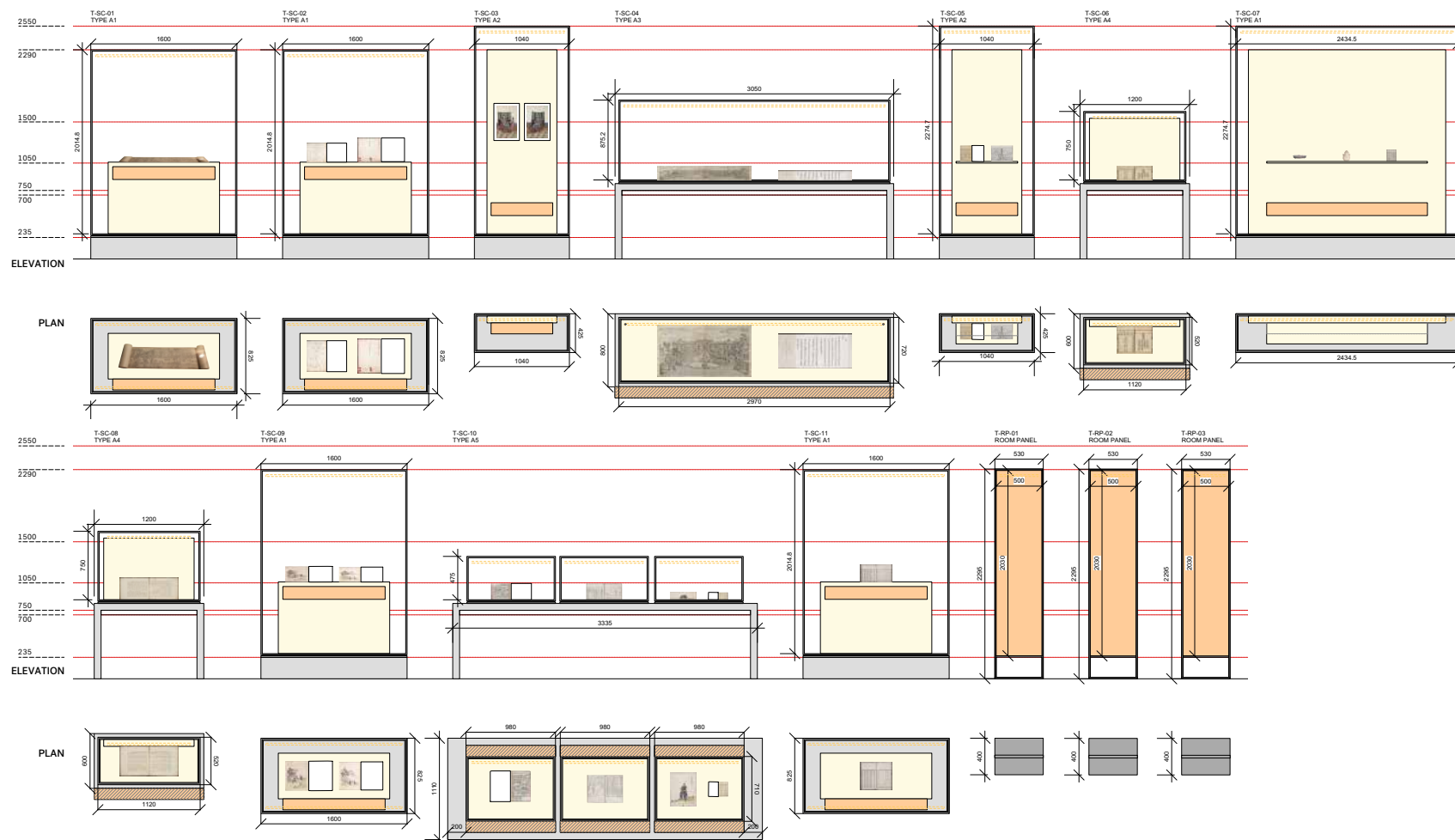
3.



No base detail

Family of Furniture | Temporary Gallery Indicative Schedule

Indicative showcase family considering existing Architectural datums.



Space 2 | Spencer & Crawford Rooms

Introduction:

To enhance the display potential in the Crawford and Spencer rooms and create clear connections with the adjacent new permanent treasures' gallery, we are proposing the refurbishment of two bookcases. These have been selected as were previously already serviced to allow for internal lighting.

Several options are being explored to showcase sensitive material in these rooms, such as inserting a fully conditioned case into the bookshelf behind the existing glass, as well as options where the glass door could be stored and a new temporary glass door with non-reflective glass and brass frame inserted to create optimum viewing conditioned and a sealed unit for the showcases. The existing service routes will be reused to ensure minimal work is required in these cases and ensure the interior lining of the bookshelf is not affected.

Space 2 | Spencer & Crawford Rooms

Introduction to Rylands and the collection. Minimal approach and retain/upgrade the existing showcases within these locations.



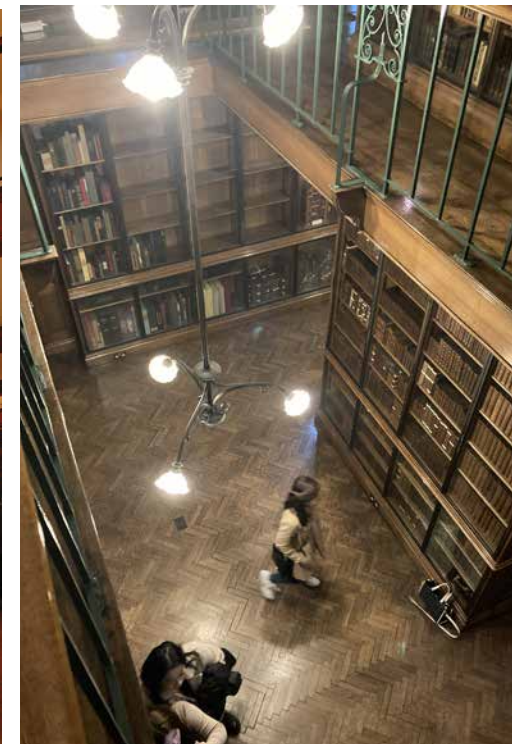
Architecture and Scale

We can encourage the visitor to engage with the vast double height spaces through interpretation, Can we pull out stories from the private rooms above creating a feeling of 'behind the scenes'



Cases

Using the form work of some of the existing cases, we can create a new contemporary display



Discovery

Interpretation to create a deeper dive into collections and research of Rylands

Space 2 | Spencer & Crawford Rooms

Relevant examples of designs where traditional cases are re-purposed/retrofitted with contrasting contemporary design approaches



Waddesdon Bequest, British Museum

Back painted glass with sections left unpainted forming apertures for display. Opaque glass offers surface for interpretation and graphic material



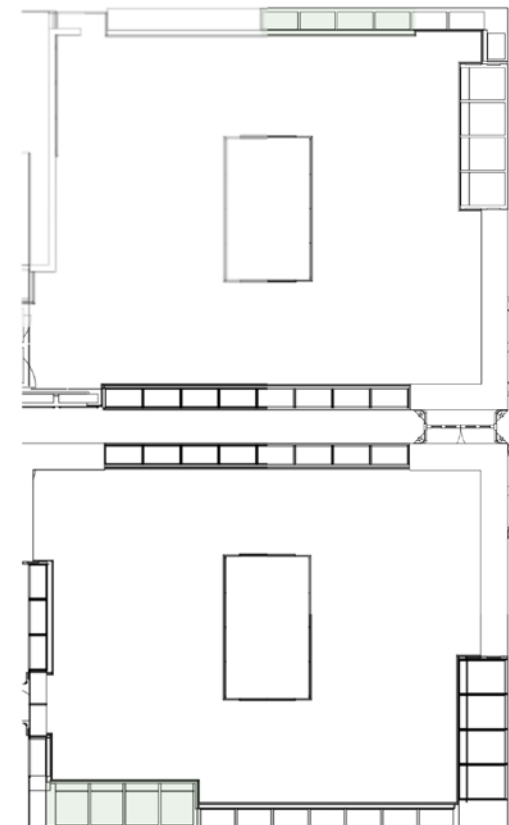
Hotung Gallery, British Museum - NRS project

Re-purposing existing traditional cases with contemporary inserts and graphics creating dynamic displays

Family of Furniture | Spencer & Crawford Layouts

Indicative concept layout

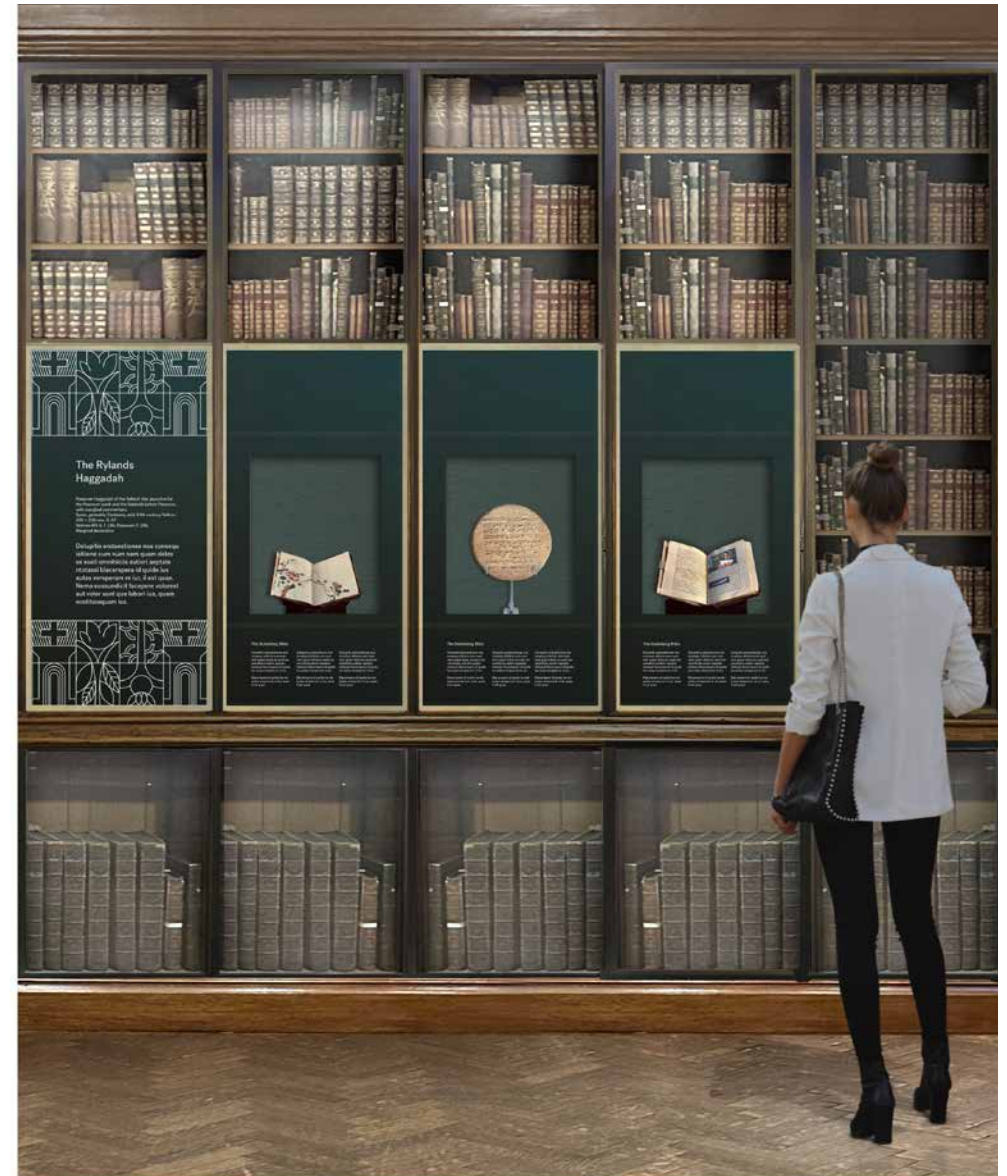
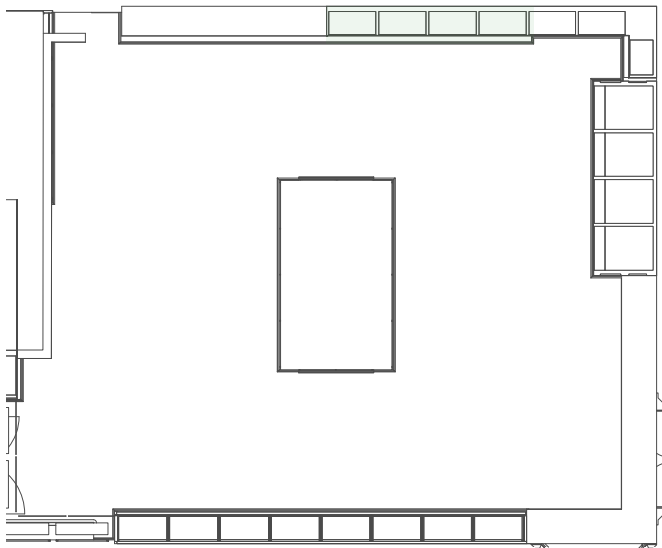
- Table Showcase
- Freestanding High Level Showcase
- Wall Vitrine
- Interpretation
- Plinth
- Bench
- Repurposed Showcase



Current Plan

Family of Furniture | Crawford Room Look & Feel

Patinated metal framed back-painted glass with apertures containing open books in cradles and other display. Opaque sections of glass offer surface for introductory text, graphic, images etc. Existing books from the working library will remain in cases within the shelving above and below sight-line



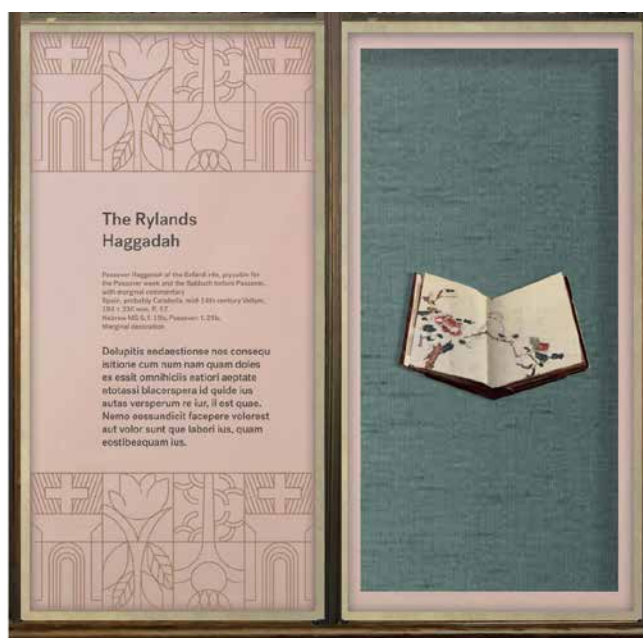
Family of Furniture | Crawford Room Design Options

Aperture Study using backpainted glass to focus the display.



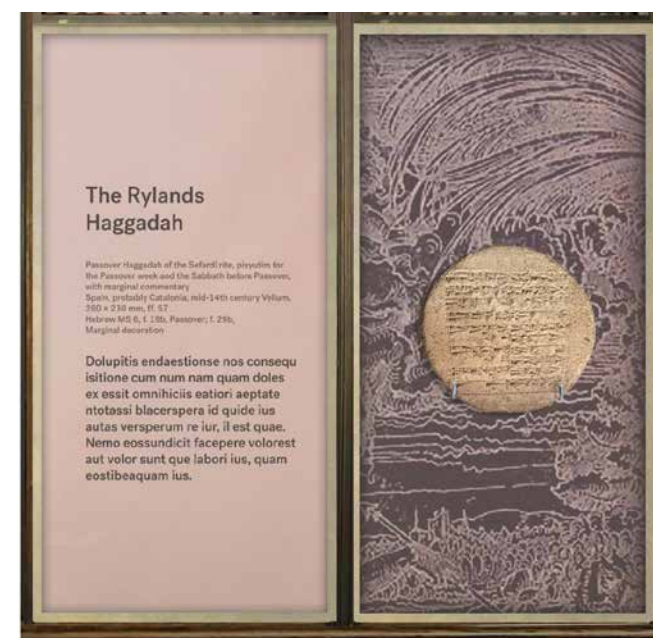
Small Fabric Lined Aperture With Text

Small aperture for object with object text on glass below



Large Fabric Lined Aperture

Float mounted object. Text for object featured in adjacent text panel

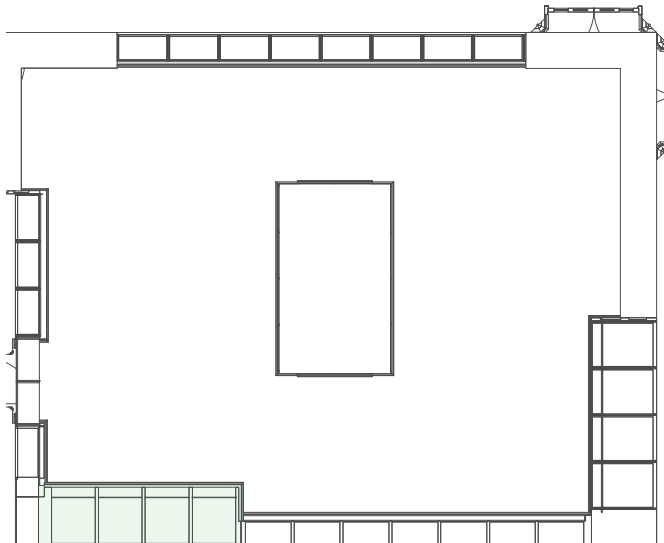


Large Graphic Lined Aperture

Float mounted object with graphic backdrop. Text for object featured in adjacent text panel. N.B Graphic example indicative

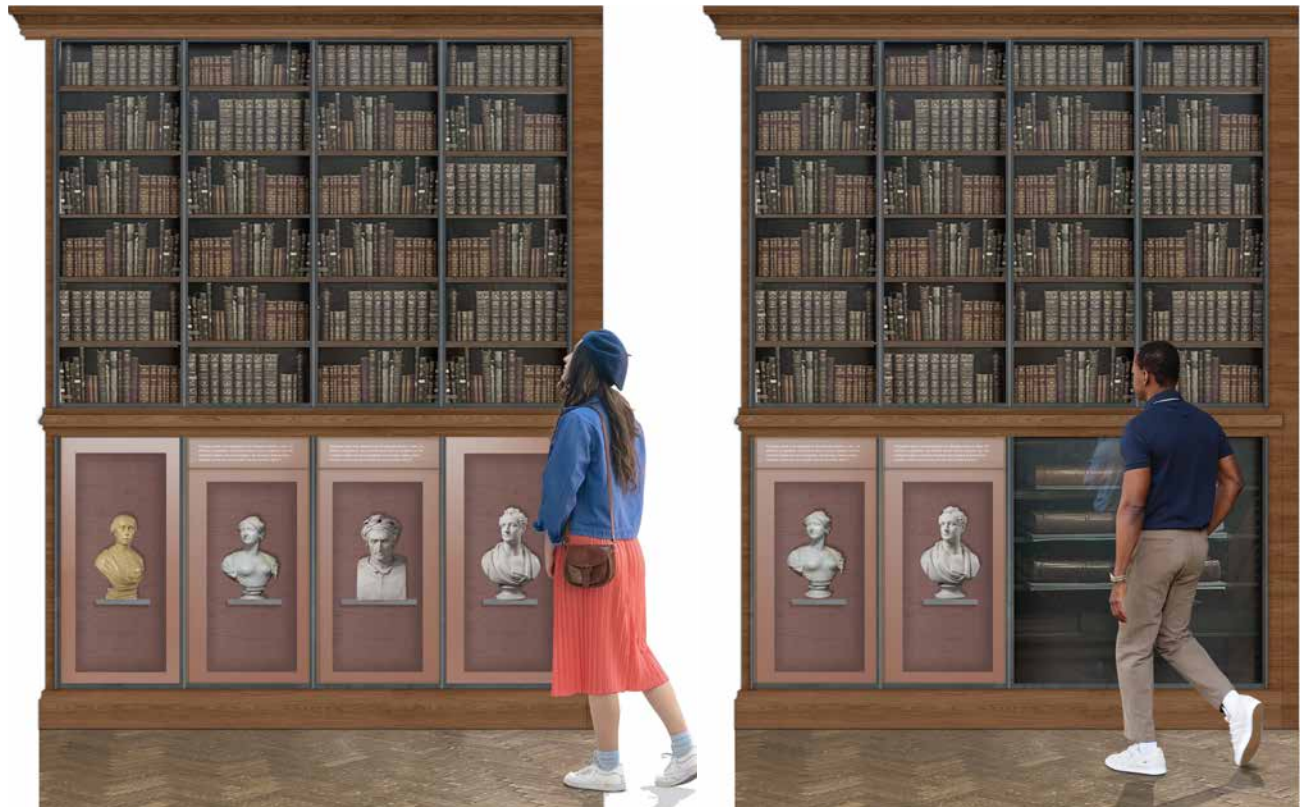
Family of Furniture | Spencer Room Look & Feel

The corner case in the Spencer room offers an increased depth for larger 3D objects. These displays could include some of the larger objects from the collection including busts and ceramics as are already stored here.



Family of Furniture | Spencer Room Configuration Options

Examples of cases reconfigurations.



Low Level Extended

Low level busts extending across 4 sections of the existing case.
Interpretive text located centrally

Low Level

Low level busts extending across 2 sections of the existing case.
Interpretive text located centrally

Family of Furniture | Spencer Room Configuration Options

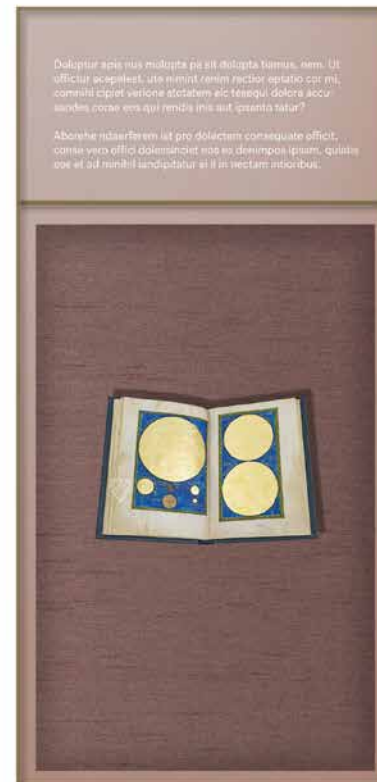
Busts and ceramics would be most appropriate for accessibility reasons suitable for these deeper and lower cases.



Bust Display



Ceramic Display



Volume Display

Space 5a & b | Connecting Spaces & Historic Entrance

Introduction:

We are proposing light touch interventions only. A new pause and interpretive moment will be developed with the placement of a bench with digital and or audio handset to provide interpretation on the Historic Entrance.

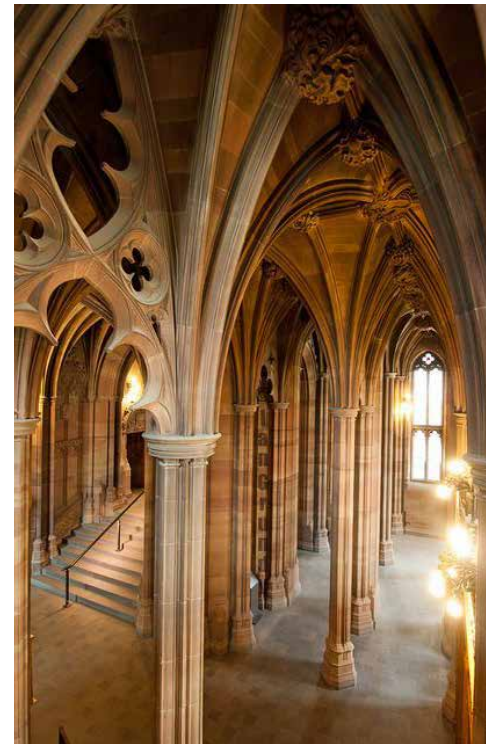
Space 5a & b | Connecting Spaces & Historic Entrance

Connecting the building to the collections. Key focus on wayfinding



The Circulation

Wayfinding to orientate the visitor and direct them on their journey



Historic Entrance

How introductory interpretation for the library can navigate the viewer up towards the Historic Reading Room



Stories

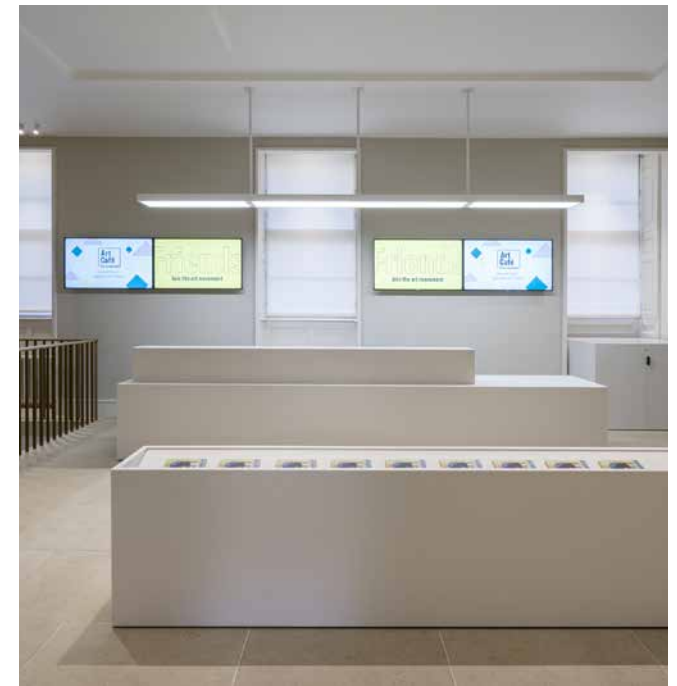
New interpretation to accompany the printing press

Space 5a & b | Connecting Spaces & Historic Entrance

NRS examples of furniture design, creating a moment of pause in transitional spaces.

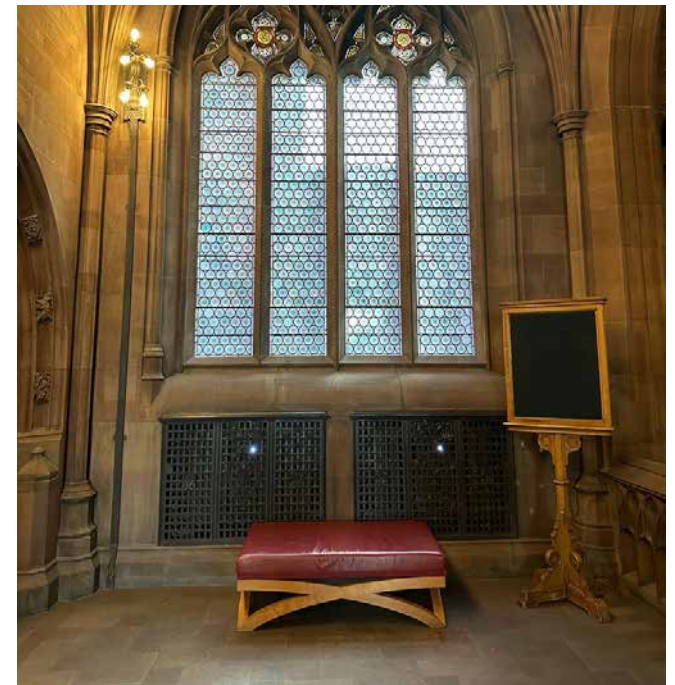


Courtauld Institute of Art



Family of Furniture | Connecting Spaces

Existing photographs locating potential interpretation/pause moments



Family of Furniture | Connecting Spaces Look & Feel

Considering the bench locations within the circulation space. Option B is preferable allowing for connection to wall sockets for integration of potential AV



Option A



Option B

Space 6 | Historic Reading Room

Introduction:

We are proposing light touch interventions only in this space.

The cases will not be refurnished but reused with new interpretation panels inserted in the glazed display areas.

Discrete elements of freestanding wayfinding will also be provided.

Space 6 | Historic Reading Room

Bringing the stories together through light touch reuse of the cases.



The Space

Light-touch intervention through freestanding wayfinding elements.



Showcases

Retaining the existing listed showcases. Considering the replica/non light sensitive material that could be included within these as well as Graphic panel insertions.

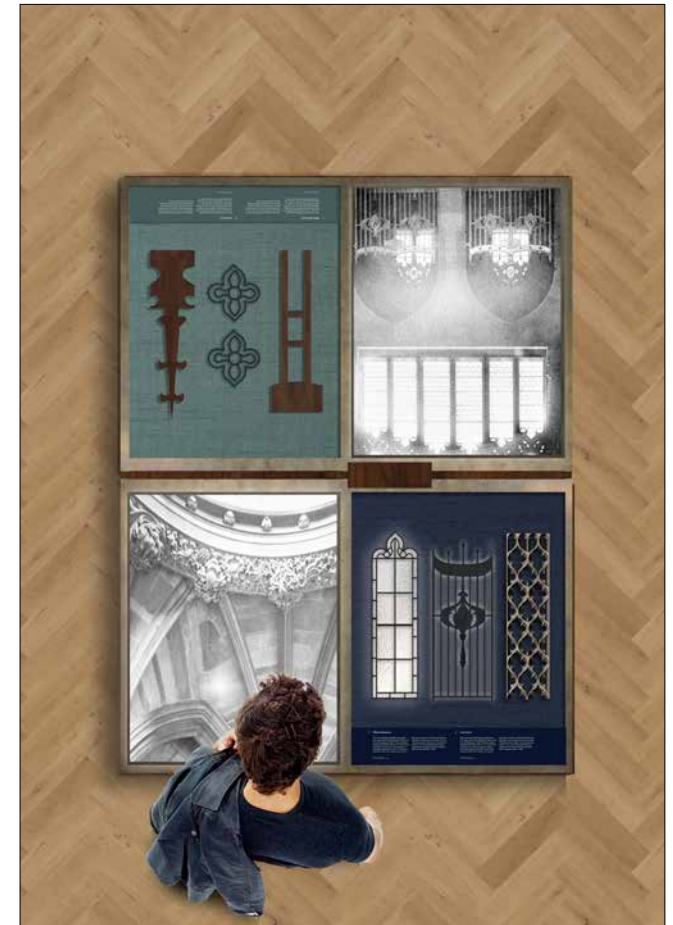


Family of Furniture | Historic Library Look & Feel

Example case plans extracting detail from the existing architecture



Option A - Image graphics /panel only.



Option B - 3D details replicas and interpretive text

Space 7 | Map Room

Introduction:

The existing case does not currently have a glazed frontage. We are proposing to create a display area with glass frontage and back lit elements to display photography and interpretation elements. The proposal would seek to insert this inbound from the existing frame of the bookshelf as self-contained structure.

Space 7 | Map Room

Bringing the stories together. Conclusive wayfinding directing visitor into the atrium



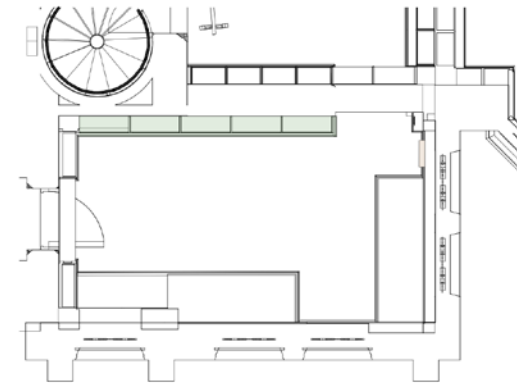
The Space

Light-touch intervention to conclude the visitors journey. Retaining the existing furniture and joinery within the space to provide photographic display.

Family of Furniture | Map Room Layouts

Indicative concept layout

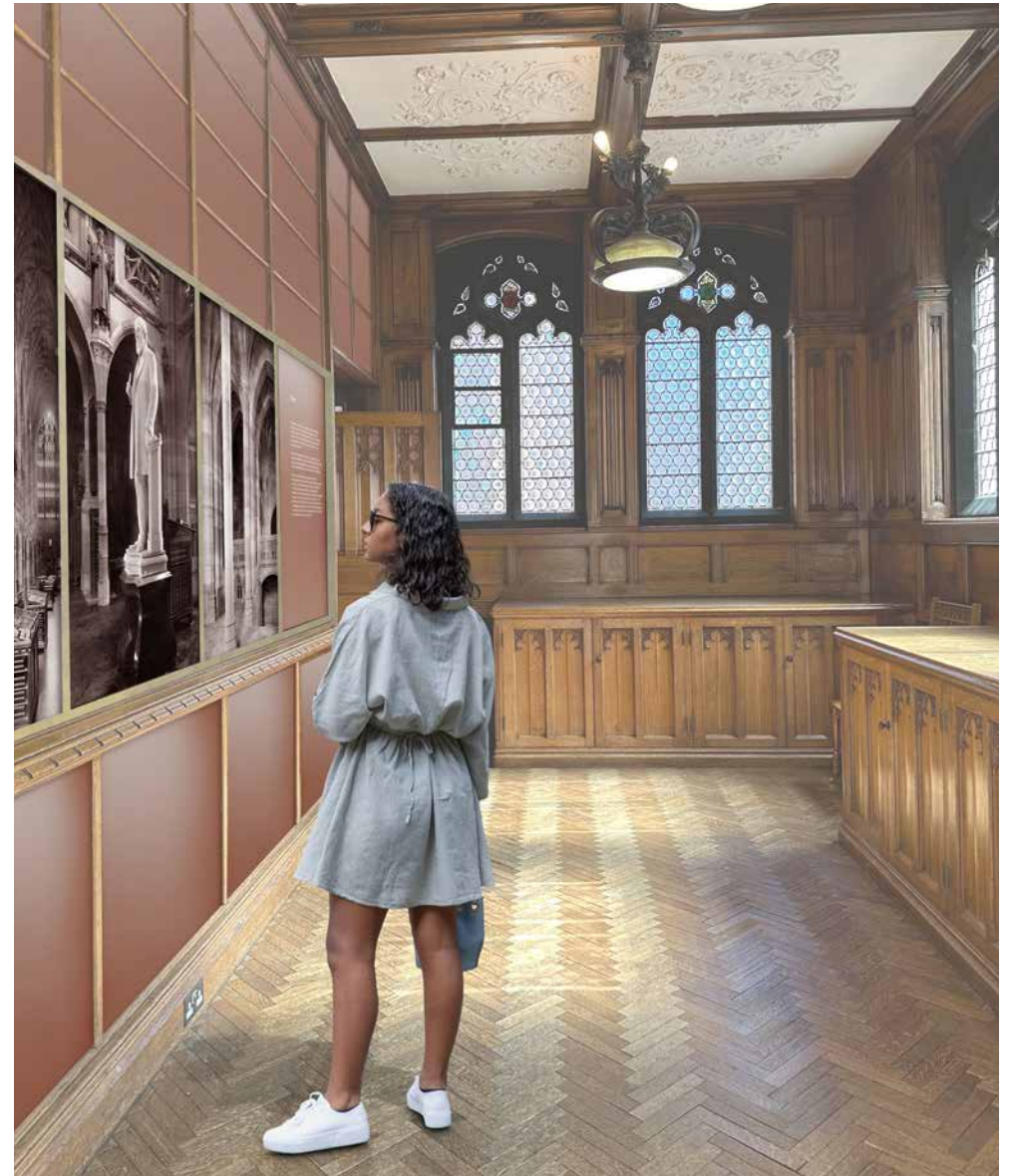
- Table Showcase
- Freestanding High Level Showcase
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- Bench
- Repurposed Showcase



Current Plan

Family of Furniture | Map Room Look & Feel

Retrofitting the existing book cases with light-boxes to show photographic material.

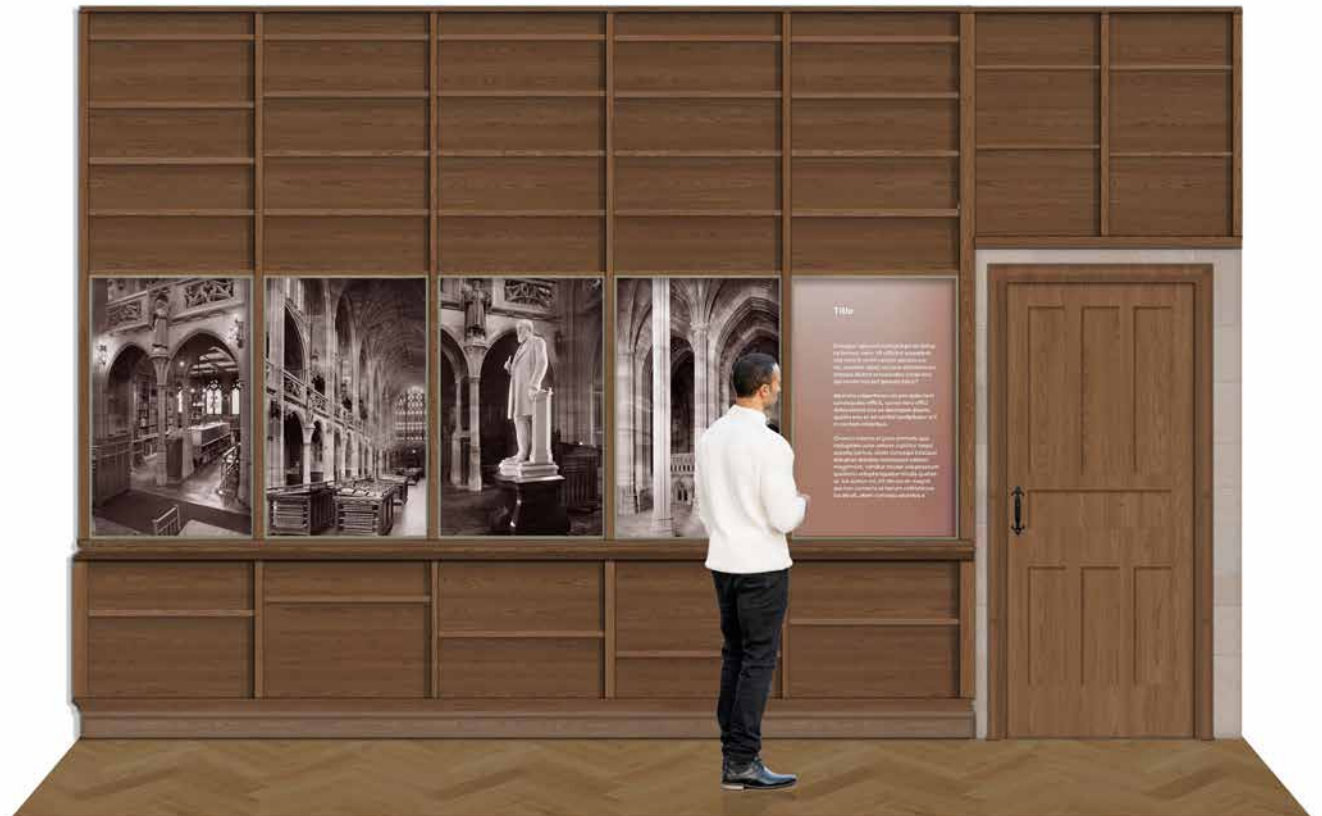


Family of Furniture | Map Room Look & Feel

Retrofitting the existing cases with historic imagery.



Design exploration - Back-painted glass grid within the existing case with full height AV, backlit or graphic images



Low Level Extended

Retaining existing case with only the eye level apertures filled with AV, backlit or graphic image display

Space 1 | Atrium

Introduction:

To ensure the visitor's journey starts at the point of entry into the John Rylands Library, we are seeking to create a new display area in the Atrium area around Enriquetta Rylands. The display consists of a large unifying base clad in patinated metal to echo the new Architectural interventions and is composed of a low base plinth and a bespoke sculpture plinth for the scaled sculpture of Enriquetta. This will be set off against a large graphic image proportionate with the scale of the atrium and adjacent slot windows.

Space 1 | Atrium

Minimal intervention to help with orientation and introduction



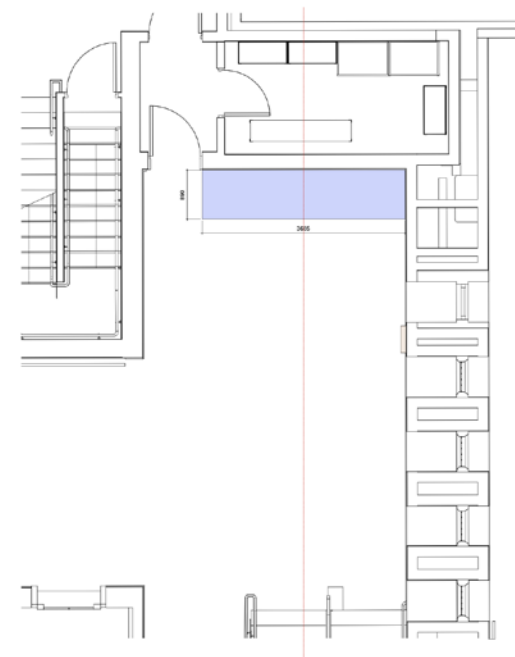
Introductory Space

We are seeking to introduce a display area around the bust display of Enriquetta Rylands at the base of the Atrium. This intends to aid orientation as well as creating a moment of suspense prior to entering the exhibitions and reading room in the Historic spaces.

Family of Furniture | Atrium Layouts

Indicative concept layout

- Table Showcase
- Freestanding High Level Showcase
- Wall Vitrine
- Interpretation
- Plinth
- Bench
- Repurposed Showcase



Current Plan

Family of Furniture | Atrium Look & Feel

Two intervention are being explored with large scale graphic backdrops.



Wallpaper & Plinth

Small patinated metal fluted base plinth and back panel holding graphic and interpretation. Plinth against a wallpaper backdrop with the original artwork relocated to left wall



Full Width Plinth

Full width patinated metal fluted base plinth and back panel holding graphic and interpretation. Original artwork relocated to left wall

Wayfinding Strategy

Introduction:

Wayfinding panels used in non-historic spaces will look to use metal split batten systems to ensure robust fixings as well as to ensure panels can be removed for future flexibility.

In the Historic spaces, we are working towards most elements of wayfinding being freestanding. In a few places small wall mounted panels may be required which will use either existing fixings or minimal fixings through mortar joints.

In the entrance atrium, all existing wayfinding panels will be updated with new wall mounted panels.

New panels will replace the existing panels to ensure the wayfinding feels consistent across the whole visitor experience with a shift in material and design to differentiate the settings of these panels. The options that are being developed shift between monochrome panels in the Atrium space and warm (red / grey) toned panels in the historic panels. A secondary option is to shift from blackened steel/ brass panels in the atrium to aged brass panels in the Historic spaces.

Wayfinding Strategy

Option 1 Solid surfaces material options



Historic spaces,
Warm complementary tones

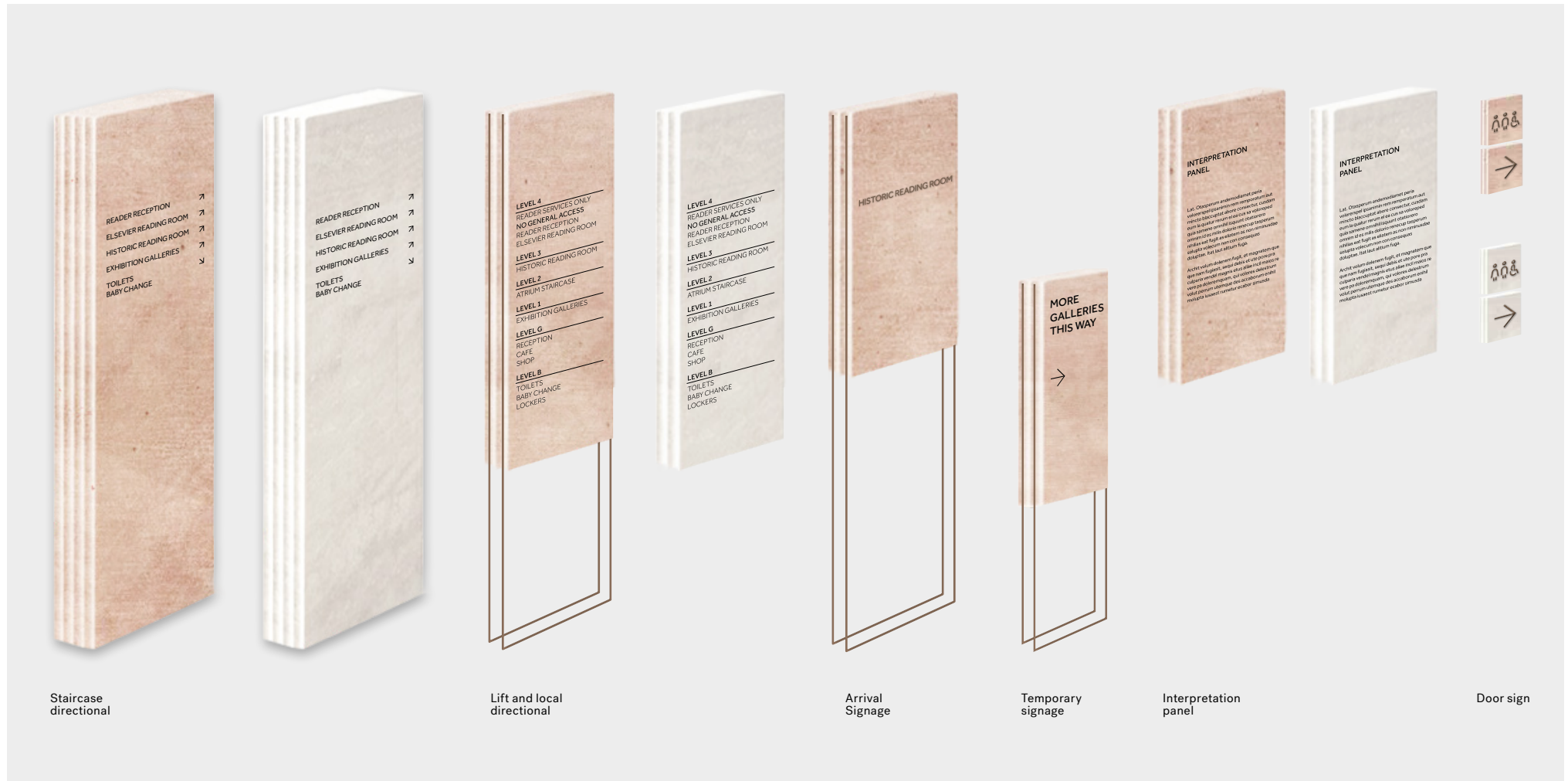


Atrium, contemporary spaces
Monochromatic tones



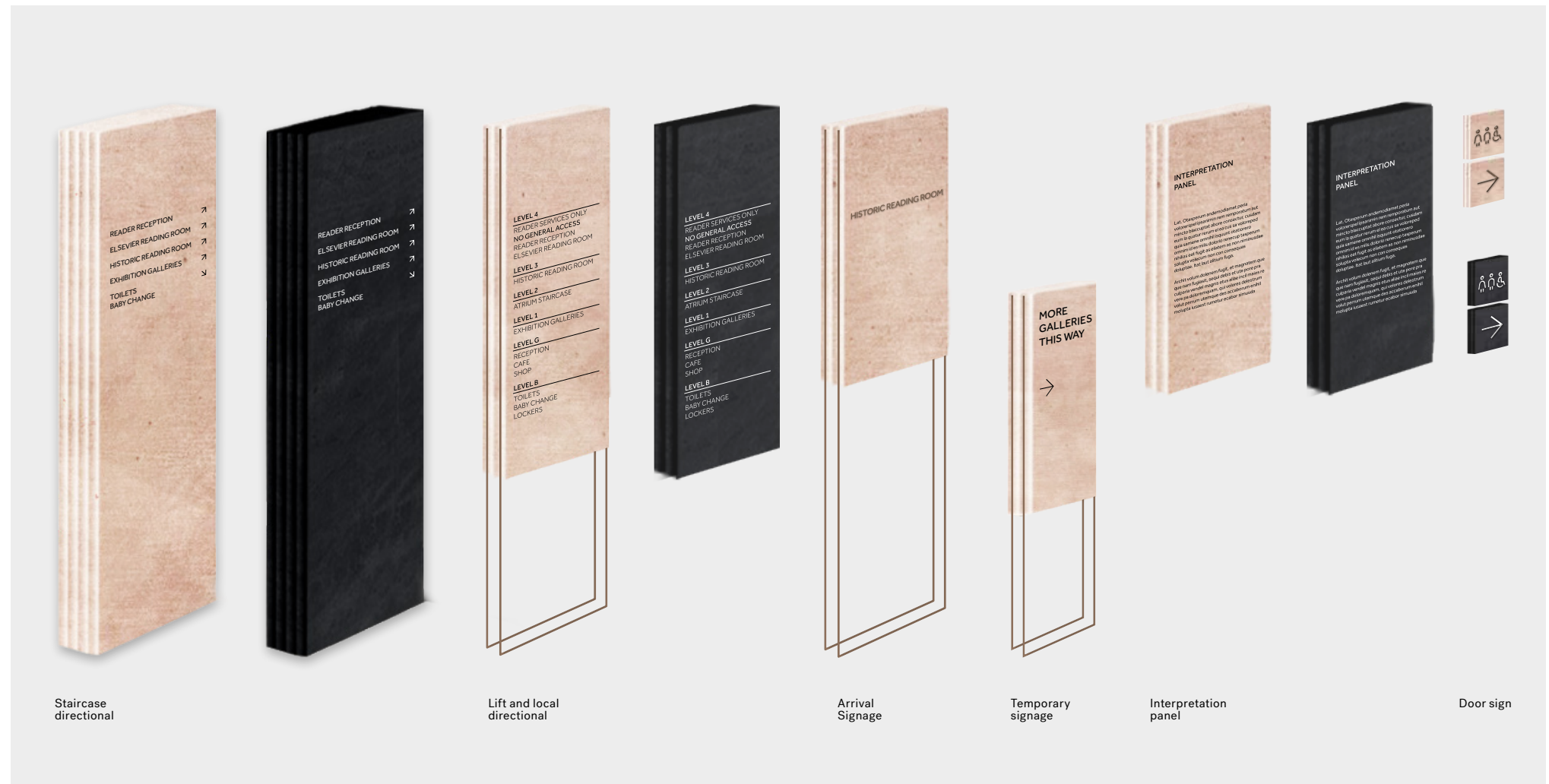
Wayfinding Strategy

Option 1 Solid surfaces material options - Light



Wayfinding Strategy

Option 1 Solid surfaces material options - Dark



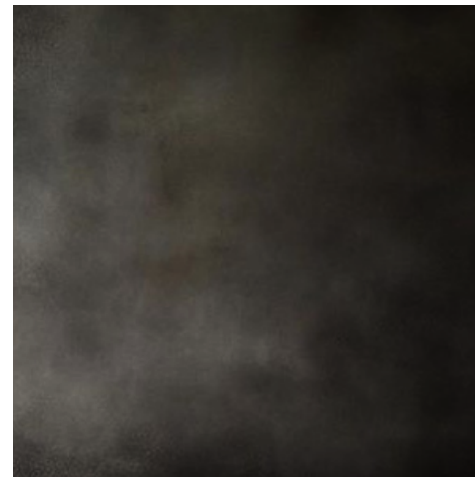
Wayfinding

Option 2 Patinated metals



Historic spaces

Warm complementary tones



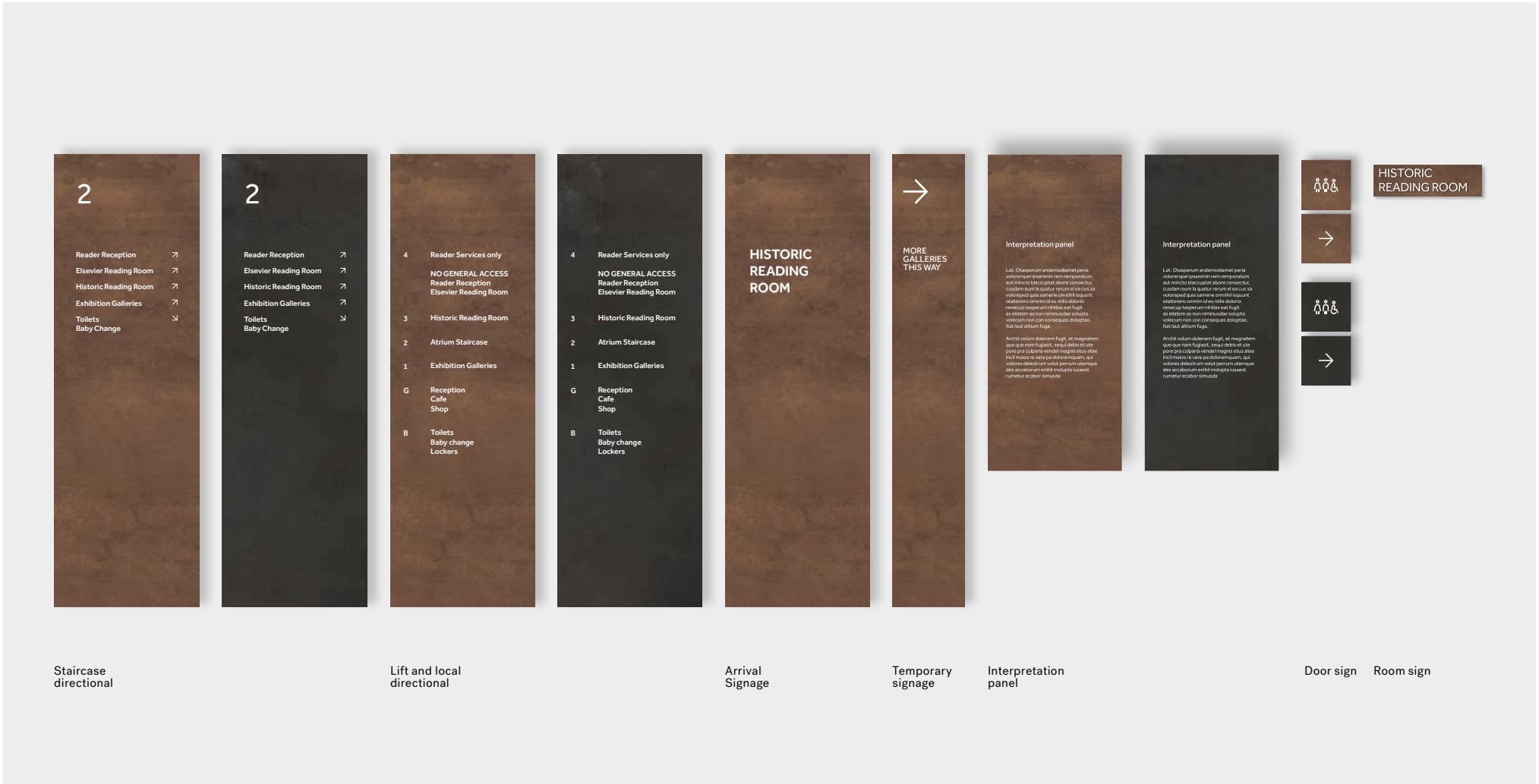
Atrium, Contemporary spaces

In reference to new base build interventions



Wayfinding

Option 2 Patinated metals



Wayfinding and Interpretation panels

Freestanding panel base studies - Frame Language



Option A | Solid Surface



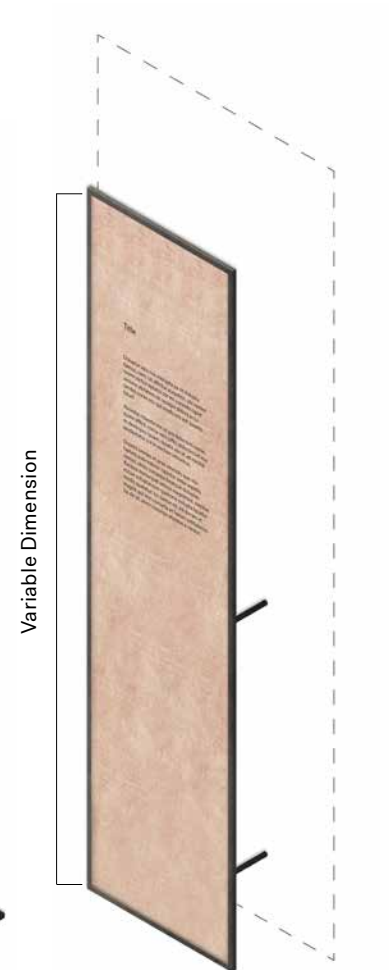
Option B | Solid Surface



Option C | Solid framed
base



Option D | Recessed 'folded'
framed base



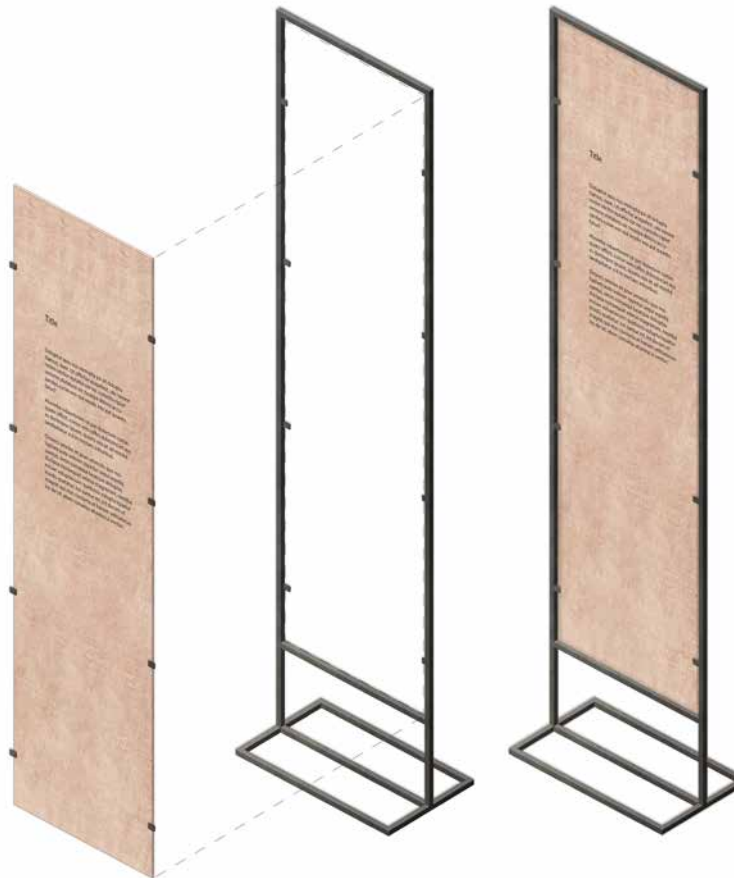
Option E | No base - wall fixings

Wayfinding and Interpretation panels

Room and section panel studies



Option A | Permanent panel



Option B | Changeable panels - allowing for panels to be replaced