



30 March 2026

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Dear Arman,

2-5 Princess Street: Memorandum of Advice

Installation of Collapsible Awning to 2-5 Princess Street, Manchester

Heritage and Design & Access Statement

This letter sets out our advice with regards to the proposed installation of a retractable fabric awning to the front elevation of The Armenian Taverna & Restaurant, 2-5 Princess Street, Manchester. It is understood that other amendments to an existing listed building consent application are in discussion with Manchester City Council. This letter relates only to the proposed retractable awning and no consideration has been made of previous planning and LBC history on the site or of amendments being discussed separately with MCC.

2-5 Princess Street, Manchester is part of a Grade II listed building described in Historic England's National Heritage List for England as follows:

Nos. 1-7 PRINCESS STREET, Nos. 59 and 61, CROSS STREET

Shops and offices. 1877, by Pennington and Bridgen; altered.

Red brick with sandstone dressings, red tiled roof. Curved trapeziform plan on end-of-block site. Gothic style. Four storeys and attic, eight windows including corner and Cross Street side; stone ground floor and frieze with Tudor-flower and grotesque ornament; slender chamfered shafts of brick and stone rising to a large gable in each main facade and two small gables over the corner, all with tourelles and finials and linked by open-work parapets, stone spirelet to end of Cross Street facade, steeply-pitched roof with small hipped dormers and large clustered chimneys. Ground floor of each facade has two wide elliptical-arched windows with moulded heads, a 2-centred arched doorway to the left of the Princess Street facade, with carved enrichment and traceried overlight (C20 shopfronts inserted in corner); 1st and 2nd floors have tiered mullion-and transom windows to the gabled bays, those in the main facades canted and those at the corner bowed, all with terracotta traceried panels between the floors and elaborately traceried open-work parapets, and various other transomed windows; 3rd floor has mostly 2-light windows with Gothic enrichment, including 2 in the Princess Street facade with carved stone gablets; gables have 2-centred arched windows with tracery.



Fig 1: Long distance view of 2-5 Princess Street, looking North from Albert Square, with Manchester Town Hall and Albert Memorial to the right hand side.



Fig 2: Close up view of 1-7 Princess Street (2-5 Princess Street is the two arched windows to centre-right of the image). The former Northern Assurance Building is to the right.

I have visited the building to inspect the elevation of the listed building, as well as the immediate context of the wider Albert Square Conservation Area. The Armenian Restaurant occupies 2-5 Princess Street, and is part of a larger listed building (1-7 Princess Street, Nos. 59 and 61 Cross Street) which extends around the corner of Cross Street and faces the open space of Manchester's Albert Square. It also immediately adjoins the Grade II listed Northern Assurance Building to the East. As such, The Armenian Restaurant and the building of which it forms a part, are conspicuous within significant townscape views, forming the backdrop to views towards the Grade I listed Manchester Town Hall and the Albert Memorial from the South.

Together with the neighbouring Northern Assurance Building, this is a high quality Victorian / Edwardian grouping, characterised by the use of ashlar sandstone to the ground floor, red brick and sandstone banding over, fine carved sandstone mullions, transoms and string courses and terracotta inset panels. The roof form is pitched red ceramic tile. The ground floor is characterised by the use of ashlar sandstone under a strong, richly carved string course (carved panels include foliage, thistles, fleur de lis emblems and dragons supporting projecting first floor bay windows. The shop openings to the neighbouring corner units are framed by richly moulded gothic arches, while those to The Armenian Restaurant are wider and more ovoid in form. The shop windows themselves are timber framed, painted, and although using traditional details such as chamfered edges and stops are not original to the building. The modern shopfronts and signage to the neighbouring shop units on Cross Street are generally detrimental to the group.

Proposals

The client, Arman Vardazaryan of The Armenian Taverna & Restaurant, proposes to install a retractable fabric awning over the shop windows to the Princess Street elevation. This will be a permanent installation, with the awning principally used in the warmer spring and summer months, and retracted during the colder months of the year. This arrangement is very similar to the adjacent commercial property, Piccolino Caffè Grande, which occupies the Grade II listed former Northern Assurance building.

The purpose of the awning is to both shade external tables and the large glazed windows of this elevation as it faces due South and is subject to over-heating during sunny periods. In addressing over-heating issues, the proposals are positive in terms of environmental impact, reducing energy usage. The installation of an awning also improves the experience of external diners, shading them from direct sun, and forming a pleasant transitional zone between the public highway and the restaurant. By enhancing the experience of diners, the proposals enhance the restaurant's attraction and therefore contributes to the financial viability of this business (considered historic in its own right as one of Manchester's longest running restaurants).

It is proposed to fix the retractable awning to the building utilizing existing fixing holes (from previous awnings and signage fixed to the building in the past).

Our Assessment of the Proposals

Close inspection of the façade of the building shows numerous previous fixings (variously filled) directly above the arched openings and immediately below the string course. These fixings indicate that awnings were previously installed to this elevation of the building in the past.



Fig 3: Photo showing existing fixing holes (filled) between the hood moulding of the arch and string course over. These appear to be of various dates and are evidence of previous awnings fixed to the building in this location.

We have also undertaken a review of historic images, paintings and postcards, which has shown that there is documentary evidence to support that the building previously had awnings, from the late nineteenth century, through the Edwardian period right up to the mid-twentieth century. As was often the case with commercial properties, these may have been replaced a number of times, due to changing fashions, the changing liveries of different commercial businesses and because they were vulnerable to damage and deterioration of function over time given their exposure to the elements.

Images suggest that previous awnings have been attached over the arched openings, as well as within the arched openings at different times in the building's history. These historic images also support that numerous properties surround Albert Square were equipped with awnings at different times. This research suggests that the installation of an awning in this location would not be out of character within the Conservation Area, and could contribute to the coherency and character of the conservation area.



Fig 4: Postcard dated 1918, showing awnings to the shop fronts on Princess Street / Cross Street corner (far right).



Fig 5: Mid-twentieth century postcard showing awnings to the shop fronts on Princess Street (centre).

The proposed installation of a retractable awning is consistent in aesthetic appearance with the immediately neighbouring awnings of Piccolino Café Grande (similarly, a Grade II listed building), and therefore contributes to the consistency of treatment of these significant facades facing Albert Square. The proposed location, above the decorative hood moulding of the arched windows and below the horizontal string course is a logical location which allows the architectural features of the building to continue to be clearly legible within close and long-range views. This is also enhanced by the open space of Albert Square and the ability to stand back and admire the façade of the building easily in

full (not typically possible in compact urban centres). With this in mind, we believe that the installation of a retractable awning is unlikely to detrimentally affect an appreciation of the historic building in streetscape views. In fact, a suitably detailed awning could positively contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

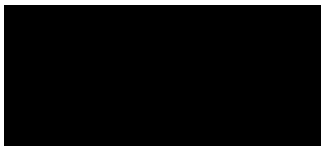
It is also worth noting that similar awnings have been installed on other listed historic buildings within Conservation Areas in Central Manchester (for example Albert Hall, Deansgate Conservation Area and Piccolino Caffè Grande, Albert Square Conservation Area). In these instances, the form of the awnings have arguably not detracted from an appreciation of the historic buildings in streetscape views (though colours, text, fonts etc are subjective). To mitigate risks associated with specific design and detailing of the awning it is suggested that a condition could be placed on any planning and listed building consent.

The proposed installation of the awning over the hood moulding of the arched windows and below the string course is consistent with the evidence of past fixings in the stonework, and avoids detrimental damage to significant historic fabric. In re-utilising existing fixing locations, the proposed awning is fully reversible in the future without causing damage to the historic building. To mitigate the risk of new fixings, we would recommend that conditions are placed on the location of fixings, such that fixings are made within existing fixing locations, or within the horizontal and vertical joints of the stonework and not in the face of the ashlar stone, so as to minimise impact to this historic building.

On the basis of the above analysis, we are in support of the proposal to install a retractable awning, on the basis that heritage impact is negligible, and it could enhance the aesthetic appearance and coherence of the Albert Square Conservation Area.

If you have any queries in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Tom Brigden

Partner

On behalf of Purcell®

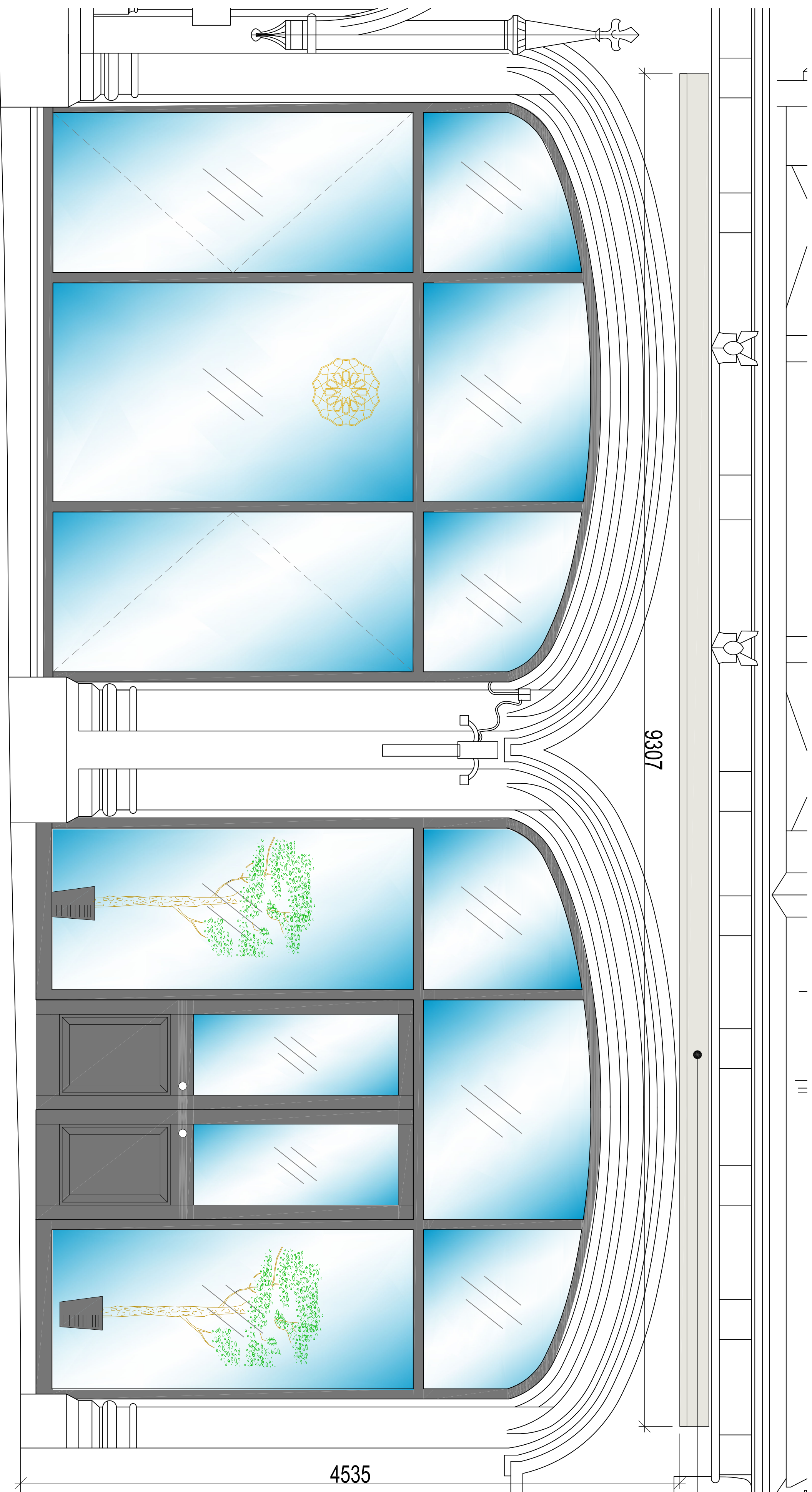
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Appendix A: Drawings

Proposed works

External_

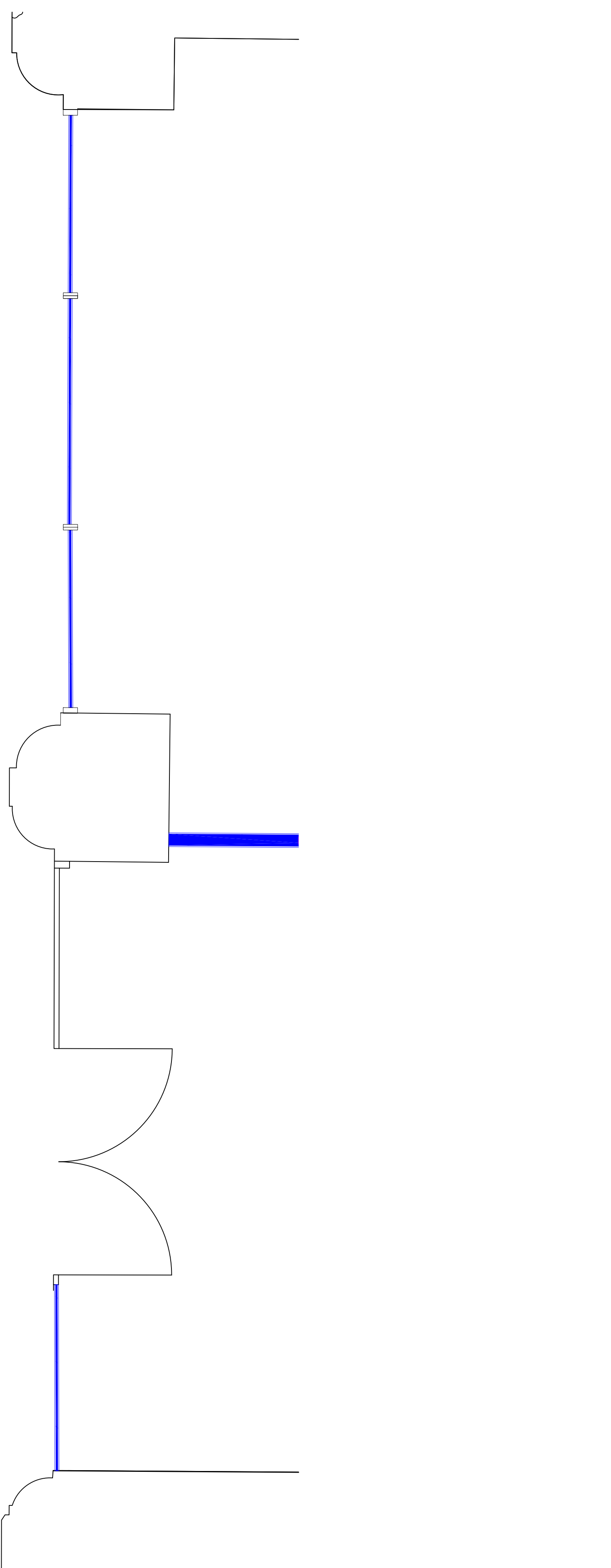
New fabric canopy by specialist manufacture to consist of light cream fabric with black curved trim.



Entrance Front Elevation

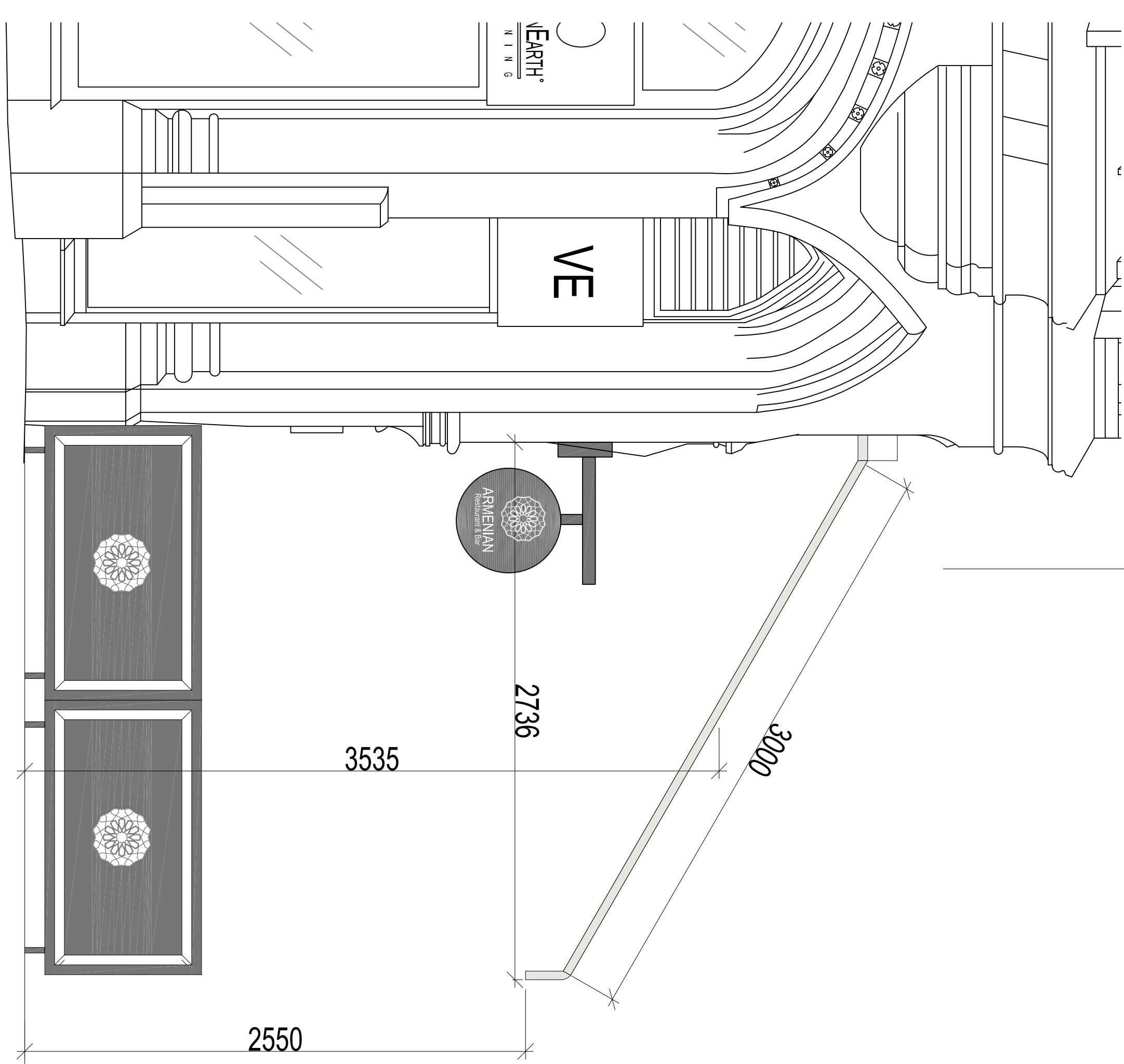
Doors Open

scale 1:20



Entrance Plan View

scale 1:20



Entrance Side Elevation

Black Version

scale 1:20

WHERE CREATIVE IMAGINATION BECOMES A REALITY						
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			James C Scott	August 2022	A1	

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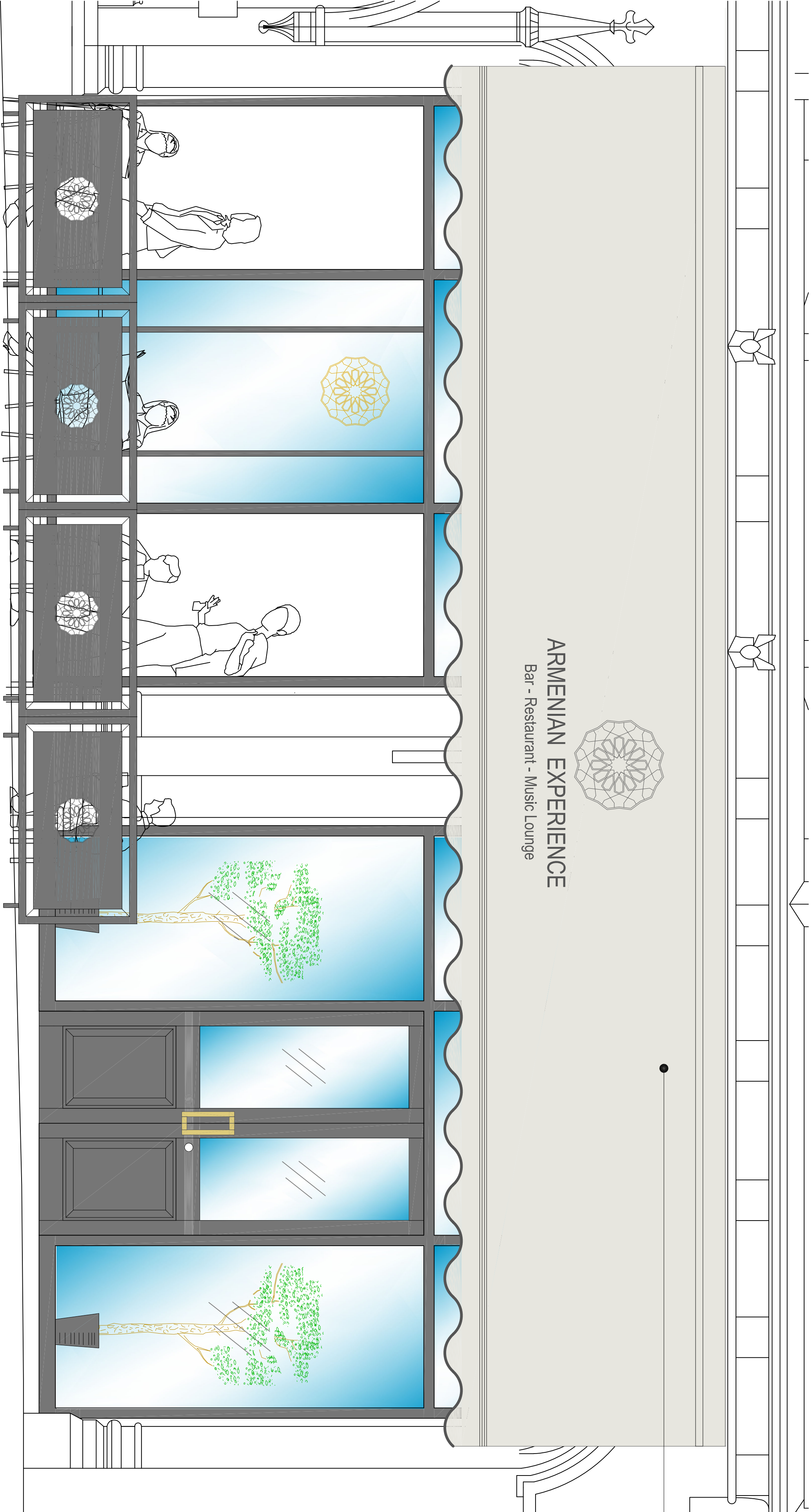


External

Example below.



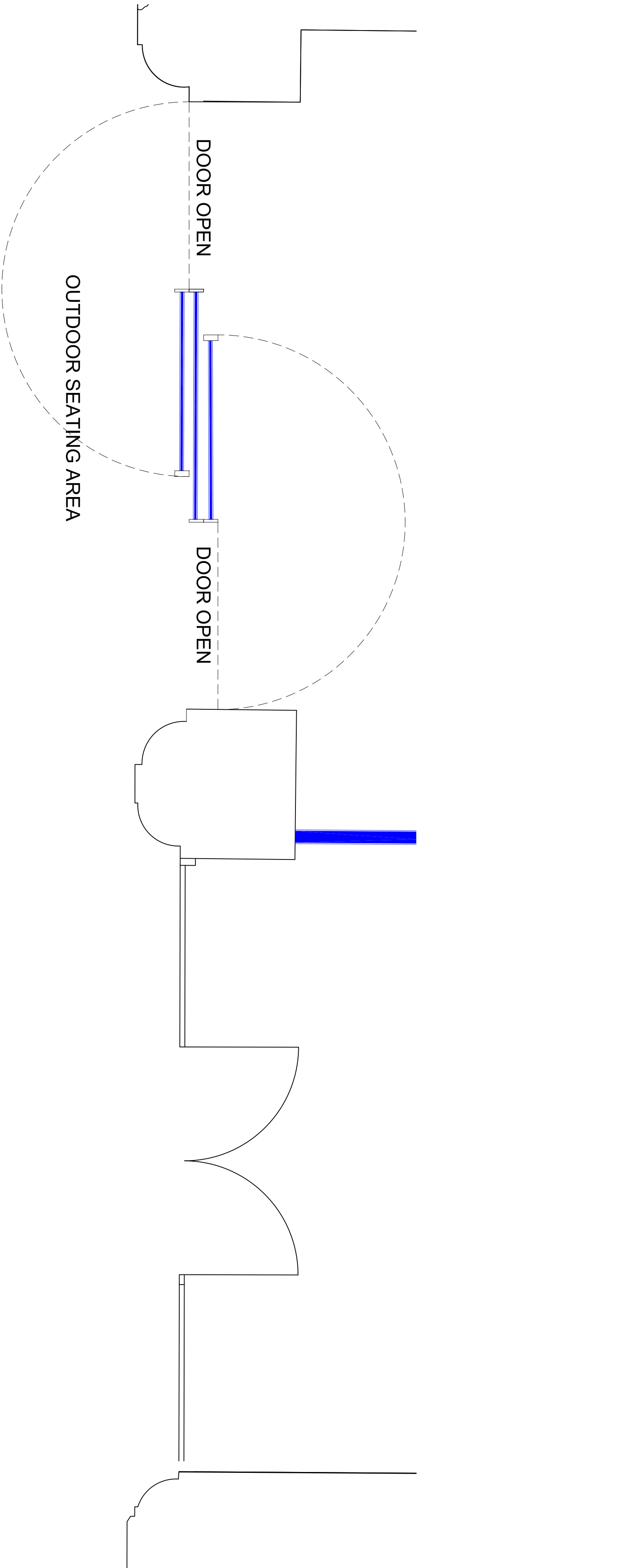
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Entrance Front Elevation

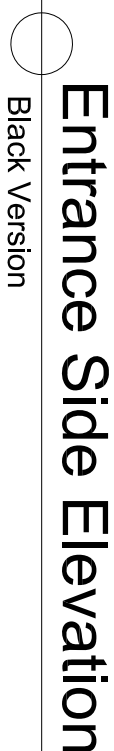
Doors Open

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Entrance Plan View

scale 1:20



scale 1:20

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			James C Scott	August 2022	A1	
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