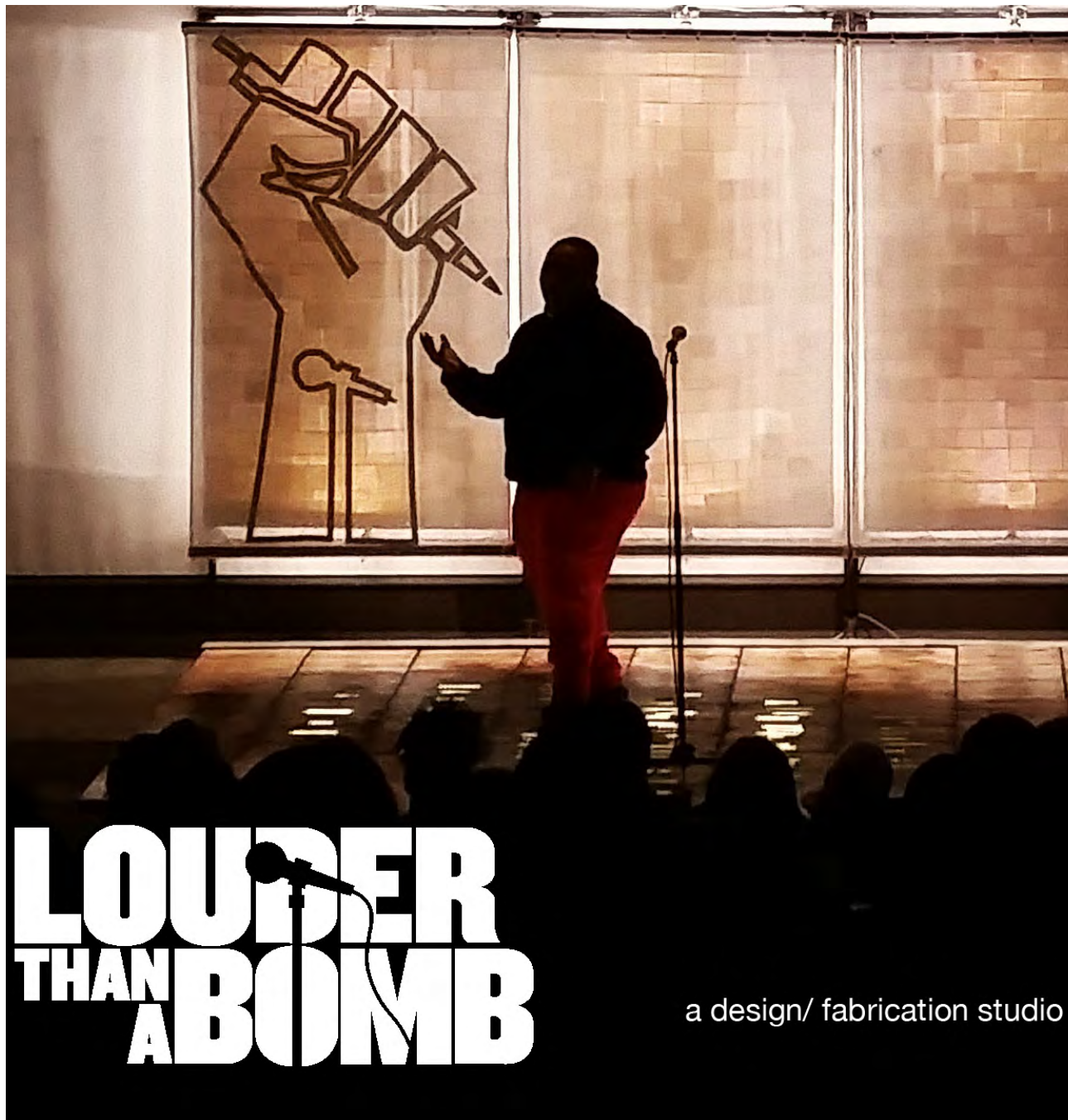


ACSA Design-Build Award

2016-2017 Winner Submission Materials

Louder than a Bomb 2

TERRY BOLING
University of Cincinnati



Louder than a Bomb is a youth poetry festival designed by the Young Chicago Authors organization in 2001 to be a platform that not only gives youth a voice, but gives them a chance to share their stories, learn from each other, and find common ground. Since its founding, it has become the largest youth poetry festival in the world, and has spawned competitions in urban areas throughout the country.

We teamed up with the local Louder than a Bomb organization to create a series of performance and exhibition environments for the 2016 semi-finals and finals to be held for the second year in a row. For 15 weeks, 4th year undergraduate architecture students collaborated with more than 12 academic and community organizations and sponsors, including Elementz, a non-profit hip-hop youth arts organization, Wordplay, a local nonprofit literacy group, and the Taft Research Center. We worked with local high school student teams to design and construct portable, prefabricated performance and exhibition environments (platforms, backdrops, walls, seats, lighting, etc.) for the competitors to use during their preliminary and final performances, and to share Louder than a Bomb with a larger audience through exhibitions. The material assemblies needed to be easily assembled and dis-assembled, very inexpensive, durable, and performative in their own right, and were designed to be re-purposed for subsequent competitions and exhibitions.



The students worked exclusively at full scale in the studio, and experimented with inexpensive and readily available materials and processes that they hoped would somehow connect to the particularities of the event- namely the rough, raw, and beautiful-sounding prose that they were exposed to through their interactions with the student poets.



A limited number of primary materials- newspaper and books, wooden pallets and railroad ties, steel, and acrylic were subject to operations like bending, burning, cutting, laminating, etching, and sanding, with the goal of transforming them from something banal into something unexpected and precious- a kind of alchemy. Because of a very limited budget (a \$3,000 grant), most of the materials were salvaged and free - old rotten railroad ties were cut into thin slices, book-matched and stitched together; thousands of pages from abandoned books were sewn together to create translucent, backlit screens, while other pages were crumpled and sewn together to form thick and highly textured surfaces; wooden pallets were disassembled, re-constructed, sanded, and burned to create a modular backlit stage.



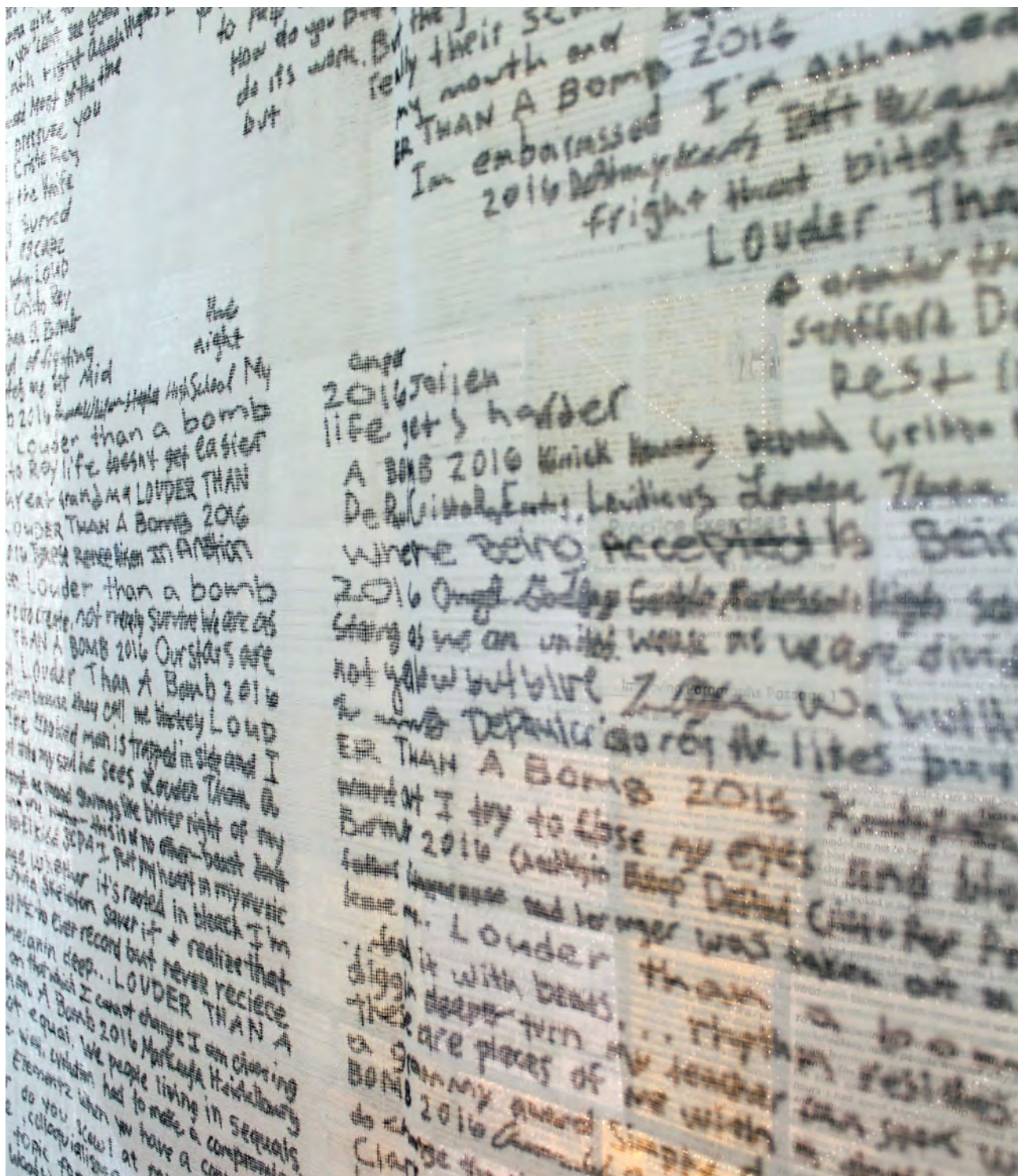
No final designs were delineated prior to construction- the projects emerged simply from the slow accretion and evaluation of constructed artifacts. Particularly at the scale of the detail, the process of enabling the simultaneity of design and construction as a technique can illuminate and reveal the forces of mind and hand working together.



The studio work illustrated here is from the second year of our collaboration with Louder than a Bomb. Several components from the first year (stage and DJ booth) were re-purposed and used to jump-start the design process for the second year of the competition. The students were asked to respond to the existing components and to expand the architectural language through their material studies.

After several weeks of listening to the poets in workshops and interviews, the students articulated three themes that were present in the work of the poets: iDENTITY, SYNTAX, and RHYTHM. These themes were paired with ongoing material studies to create a series of constructed soundscapes that were composed from sampled voice recordings of the poets. Bluetooth speakers were integrated into the exhibition environments to play the curated recordings.

The three soundscapes were exhibited at several venues during the competition, including the Contemporary Arts Center. The pieces introduced the public to the work of the student poets through visual, tactile, and aural constructions.



IDENTITY

Poets create Identity through performance, sharing personal stories in the safe environment of the stage

materials:

steel

re-sawn pallet wood

acrylic strips with LED lighting

quilted book pages

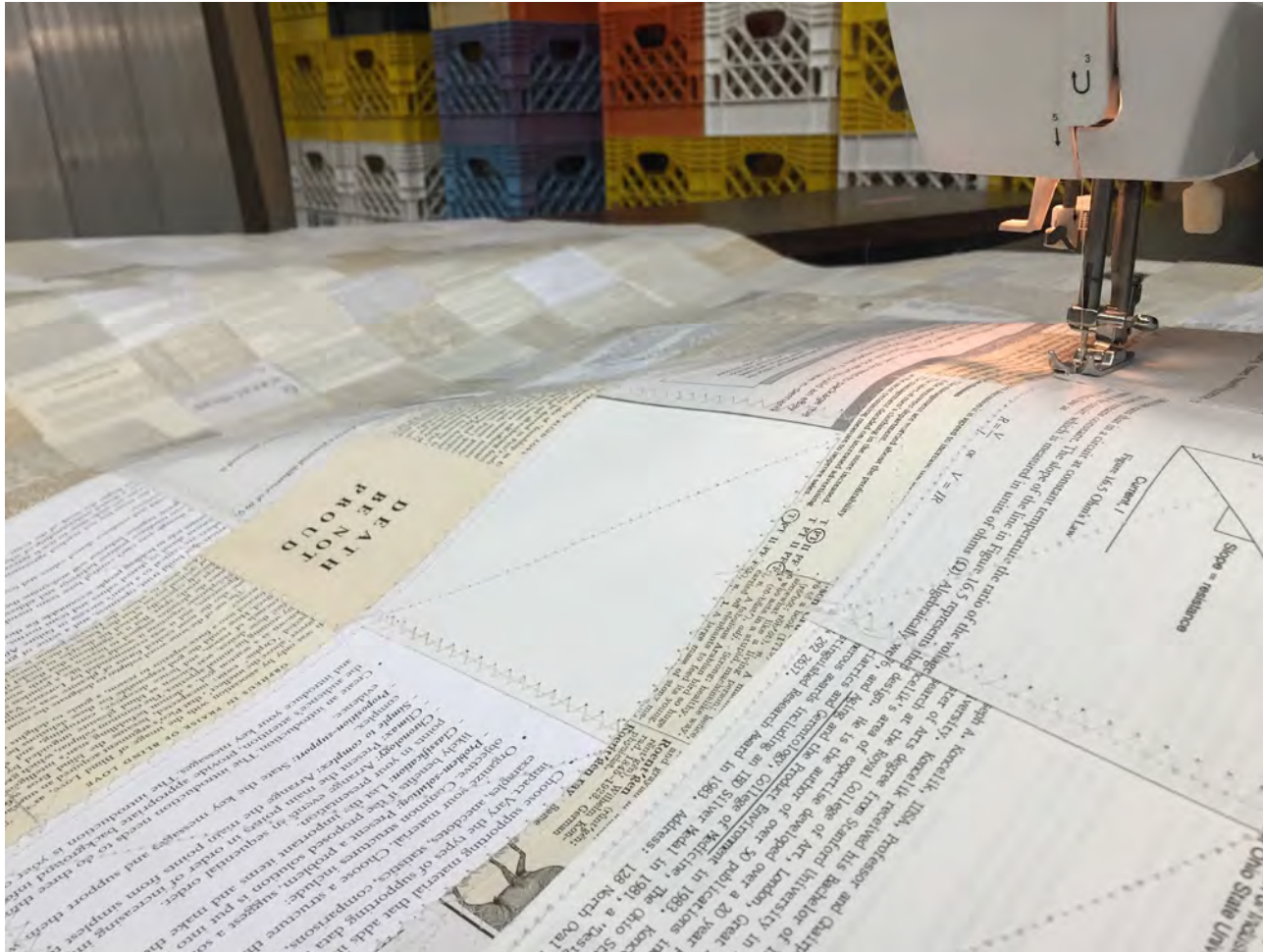
handwritten names and prose on fabric scrim



Experimenting with fabric and light



Prose written in the poets' own handwriting was traced onto the first layer of the backdrop



Recycled book pages were sewn together to create the second layer of the backdrop



Paper quilts were riveted and hung on the armature



Backlit quilted book pages



A steel angle frame deck and armature were fabricated to support the stage modules and backdrop







SYNTAX

Poets create meaning, structure, and order through the careful selection and organization of words and phrases.

materials:

steel

crumpled and sewn book pages

binder clips



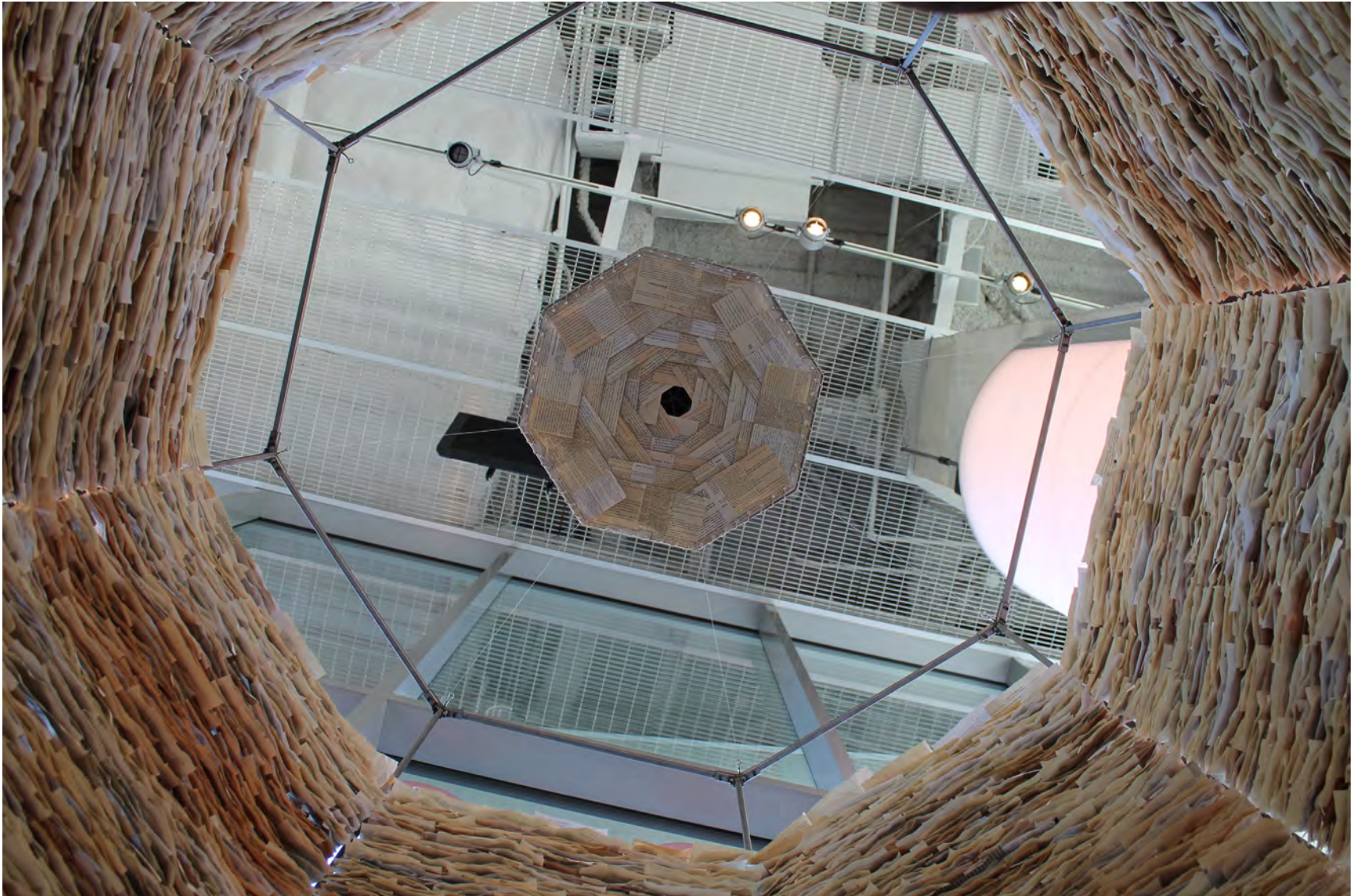
Recycled book pages were crumpled, folded, and sewn together along the fold



Pages were trimmed to size on each end



Rows of folded and sewn pages were threaded onto steel rods using the looped end of binder clips , creating a unique texture on the open side of the pages, and a uniform, linear pattern on the folded side



A web of folded and stitched pages support a bluetooth speaker playing the "Identity" soundscape







RHYTHM

Poets create soundscapes and rhythms through tone, articulation, syncopation, and repetition.

materials:

steel

book-matched railroad tie shingles

string

binder clips



The "Rhythm" exhibition was made from salvaged railroad ties, a tangible connection to local history



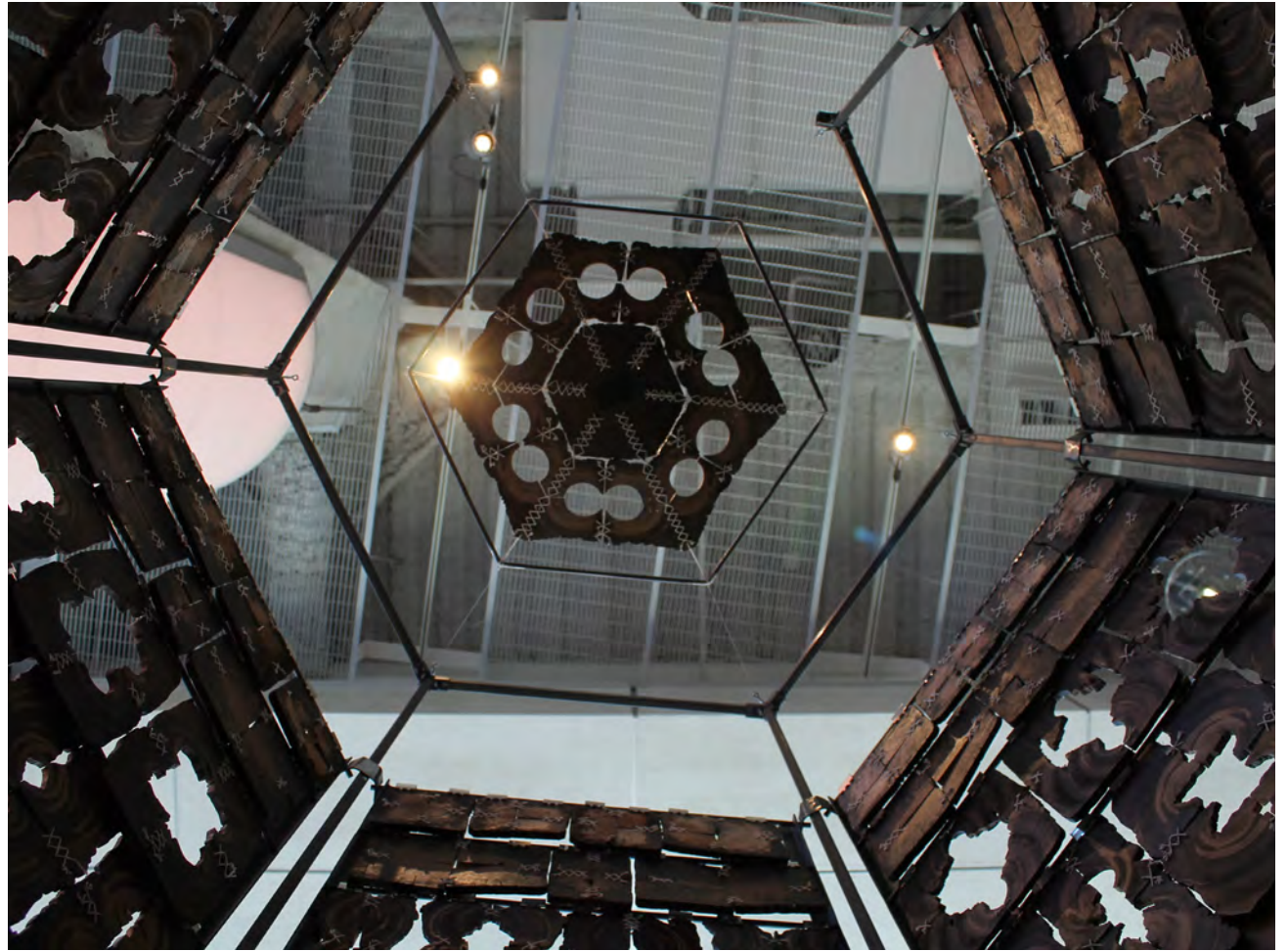
The railroad ties were cut into 1/4" sections



Sections were stitched together to form shingles



Book-matched shingles were clipped to the steel rod frame with binder clips



Unique tie slices were stitched together to form the web that holds the “Rhythm” soundscape speaker



