

# THE ARCHITECTURE OF REMOVAL

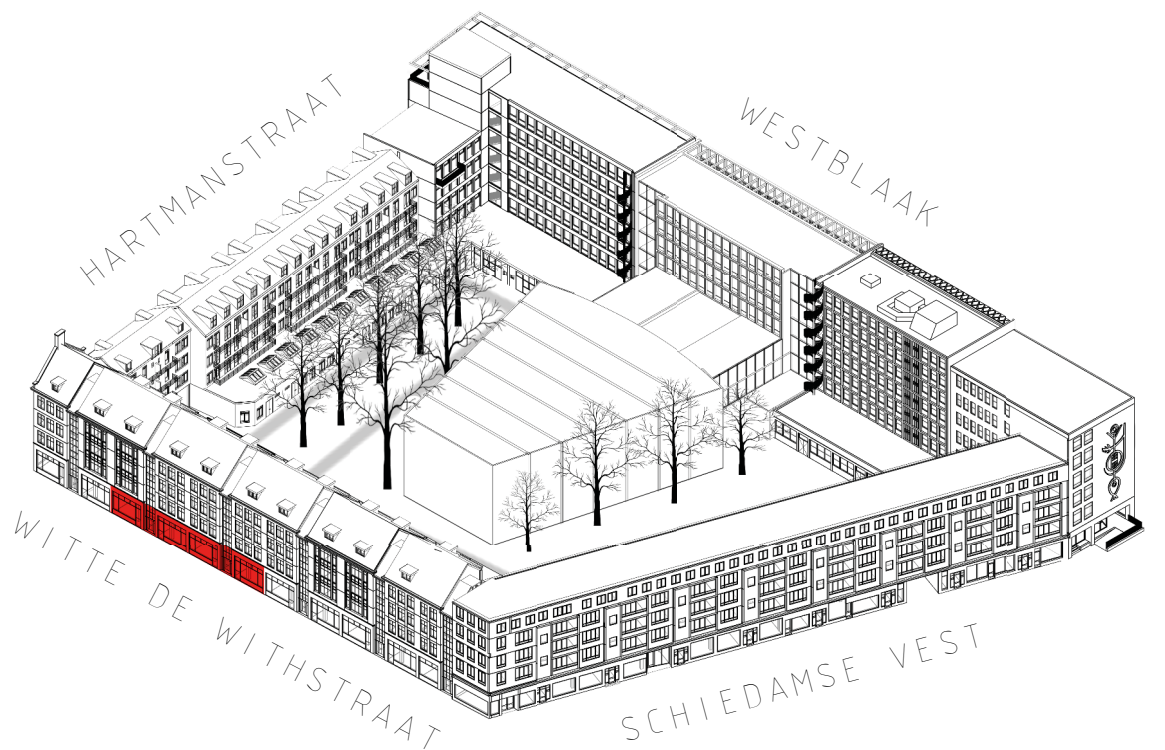
ABEL  
DE  
RAADT

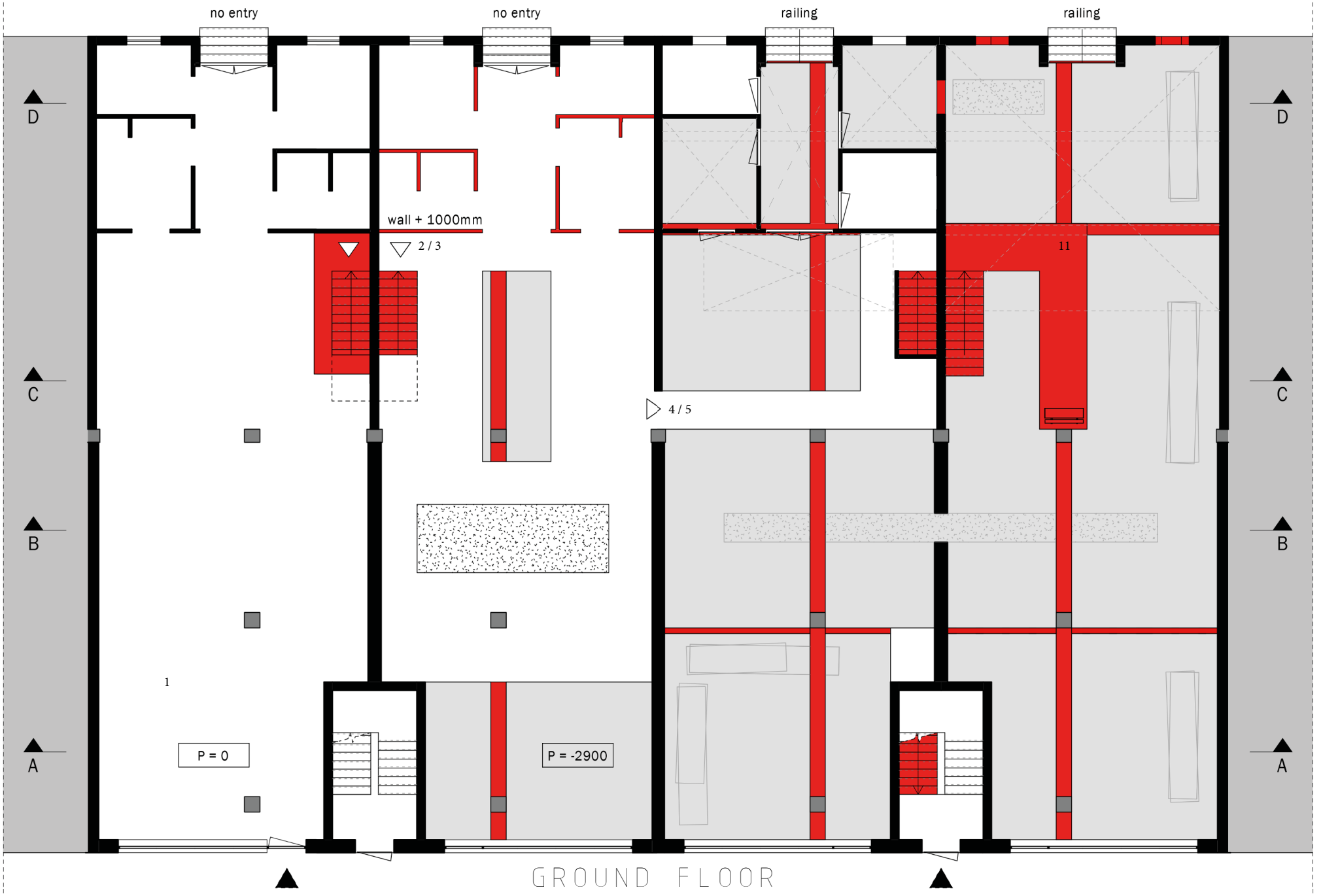
Rotterdam is a city with a strong identity. Bombed and partly destroyed during World War II and rebuilt from its own ashes. This reconstruction is a strong symbolic act of willpower and identity forming. The diligence associated with this act is reflected in its built environment. The multitude of architectural expressions, experiments and possibilities characterize the city. As a result, the city has become strongly densified over the years. This feature is well represented in the Witte de Withstraat, with buildings from the late 1950s, a commercial plinth/pavement and residential upper floors. Since the reconstruction and urban renewal in Rotterdam, much emphasis has been placed on urban densification. The major developments have often ignored what the residents actually need: peace and quiet, open space and variety. Experiencing these three properties is a primary living and housing need for every person and therefore also the urban inhabitant.

The intervention of this project takes place in the expedition court, the Schiedamse Vesthof in Rotterdam and focuses on the buildings adjacent to the Witte de Withstraat. An expedition court is a typical urban phenomenon in Rotterdam, with a logistic back street or courtyard, often characterized by modest entrance gates, warehouse entrances, parking spaces and little street traffic. In contrast to this peace and tranquillity, we find the Witte de Withstraat, adjacent to the block. In this busy commercial shopping street, the various traffic flows are bound closely together and the infrastructure and public functions are often spatially intertwined. The street scene is a repetition of a conventional pattern of living, shopping and transportation. Each block located on the Witte de Withstraat therefore has the same conventional character. This is where the project intervenes.

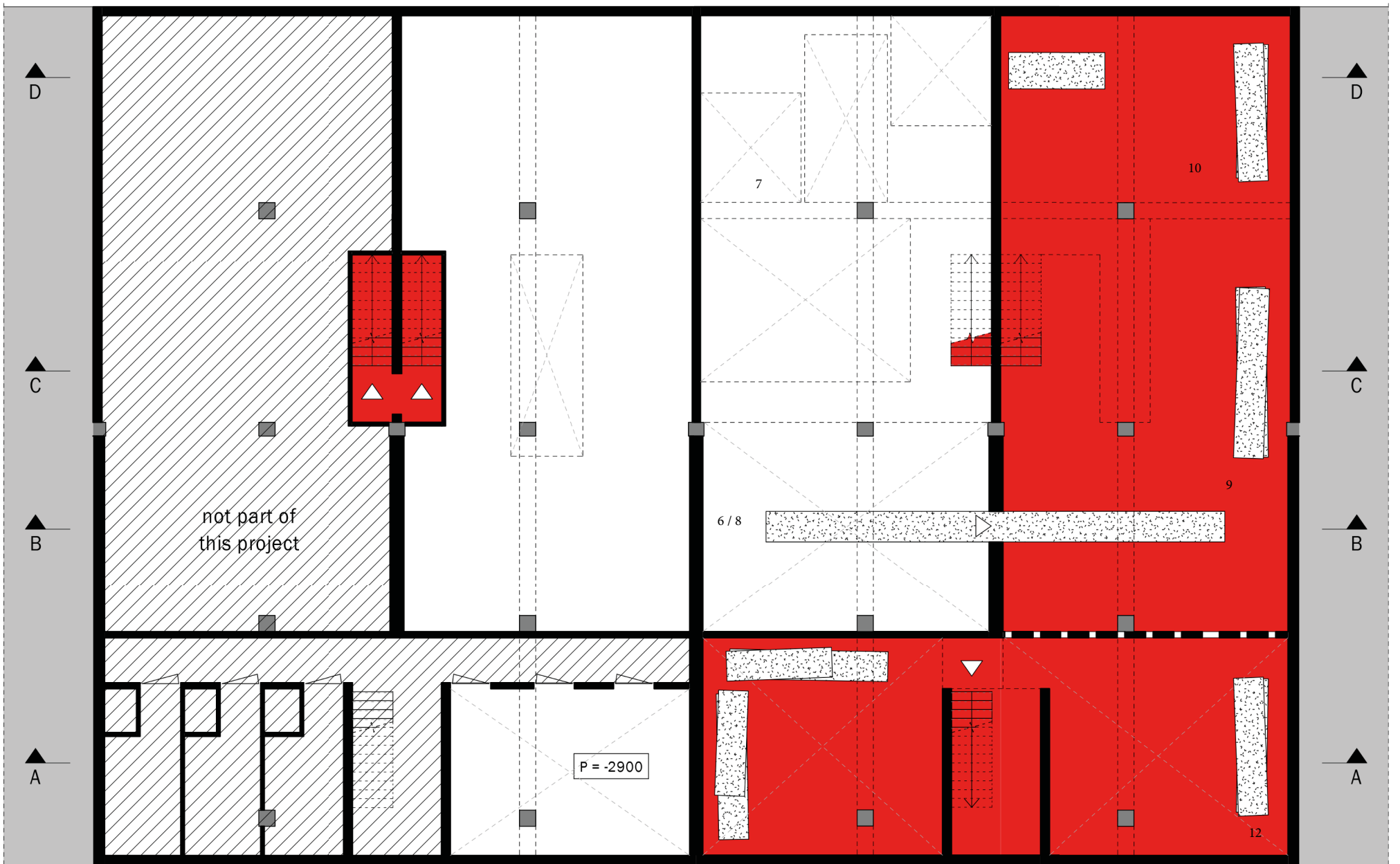
The aim of the intervention is to create an alternative environment in which one can escape the bustle and conventional character experienced near the Witte de Withstraat. The volume of four retail shops is used to take the visitor on a journey. When moving through the four spaces, the standards, customs and conventions we set for architecture are shown not to be fixed truths, but free choices we make as humans. This is done in an increasing manner per room by playing with demolished voids and their resulting debris, using colour and letting daylight in. Walls, floors and roofs are demolished and new spatial qualities are created. The demolished rubble is used as a new physical identity which engages in a spatial relationship with its original position. In the four volumes, the progression is shown in from 'traditional/conventional' use of space to 'unconventional, free and creative use of space'. The last volume is a total manifestation of the underlying ideas. By arranging the last space for residing rather than moving, the opportunity is created to contemplate and let the concept sublimate in the mind of the visitor. The building is then liberated from its traditional 'tension' that men has imposed on it. As Gordon Matta Clark showed in the 1970s, buildings, like people, have self-worth. By giving them light, space, creativity and freedom, they came to life and show their full potential.

The experience of this project will shake up the conventional view of our use of space, and questions will arise about convention versus necessity. The primary aim is to create an interesting and engaging public space. Secondary is telling the architectural-political message. In no way will the project explicitly impose this message, its strength must lie in stimulating the visitor's suggestion and imagination. This project shows in a gradual, accompanying and almost allegorical way the architectural possibilities and freedoms that have always been within reach.





BASEMENT



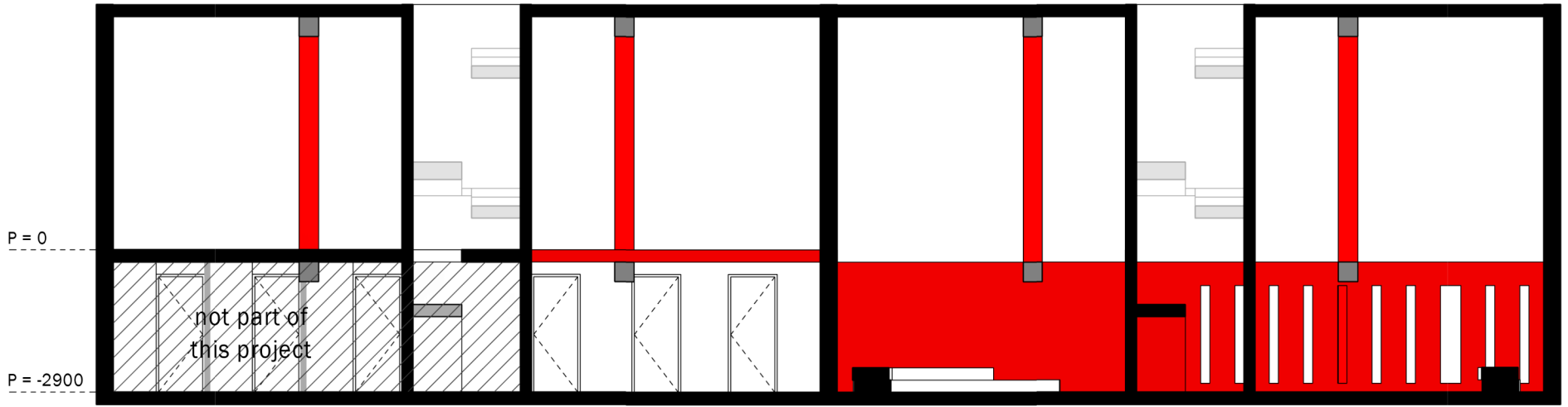


ROOM 1

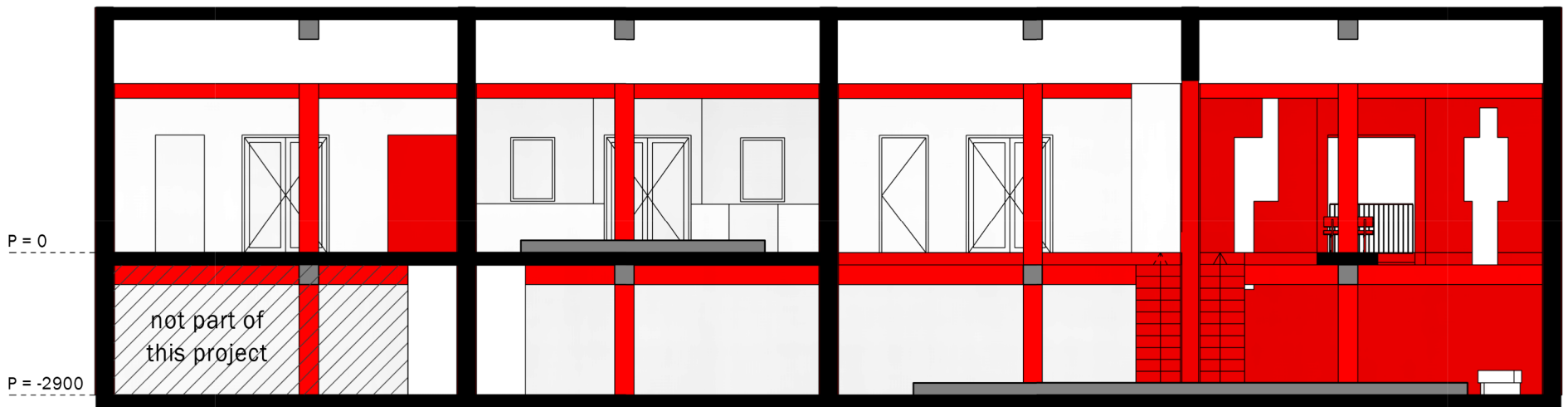
ROOM 2

ROOM 3

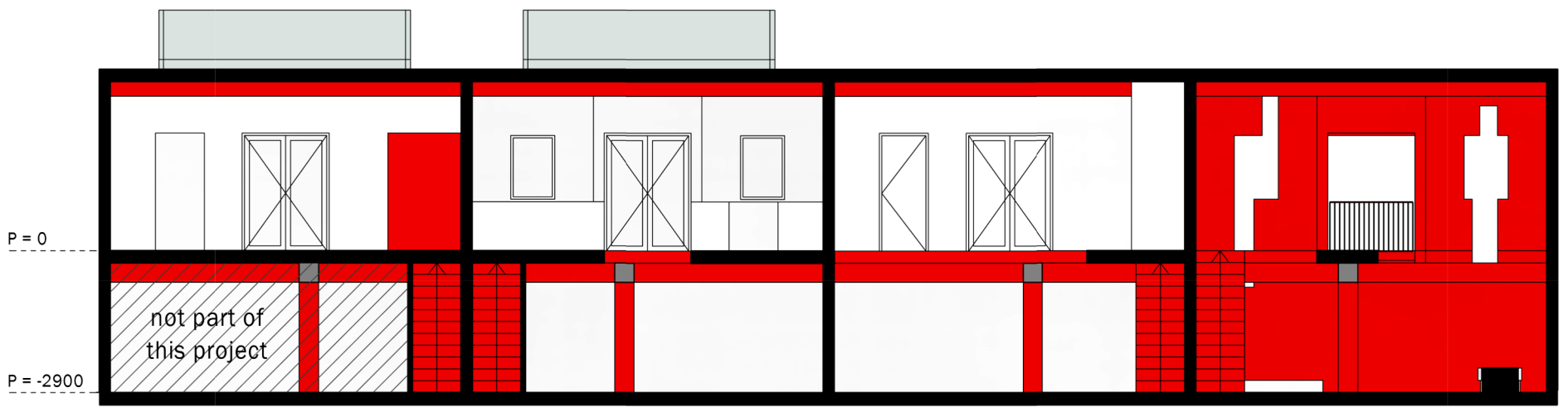
ROOM 4



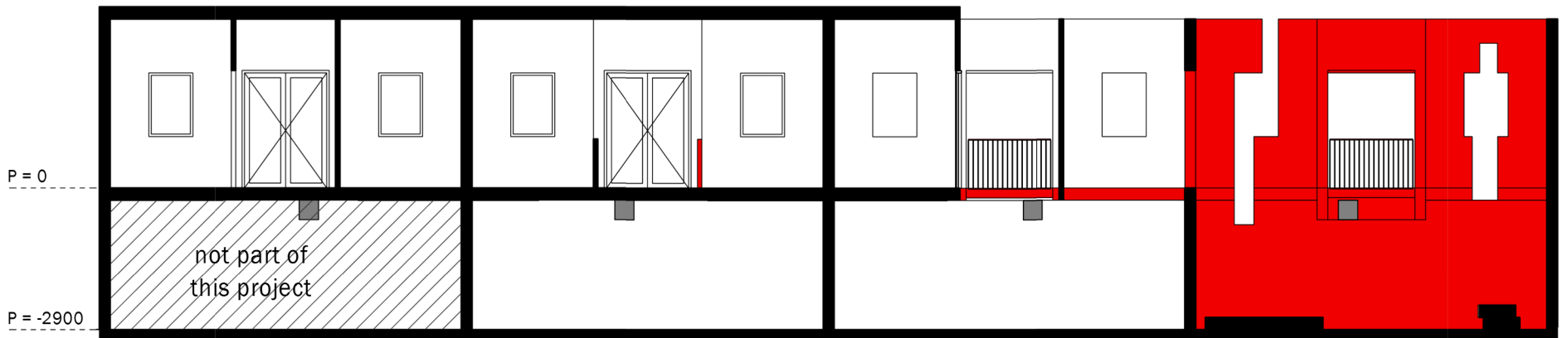
SECTION A



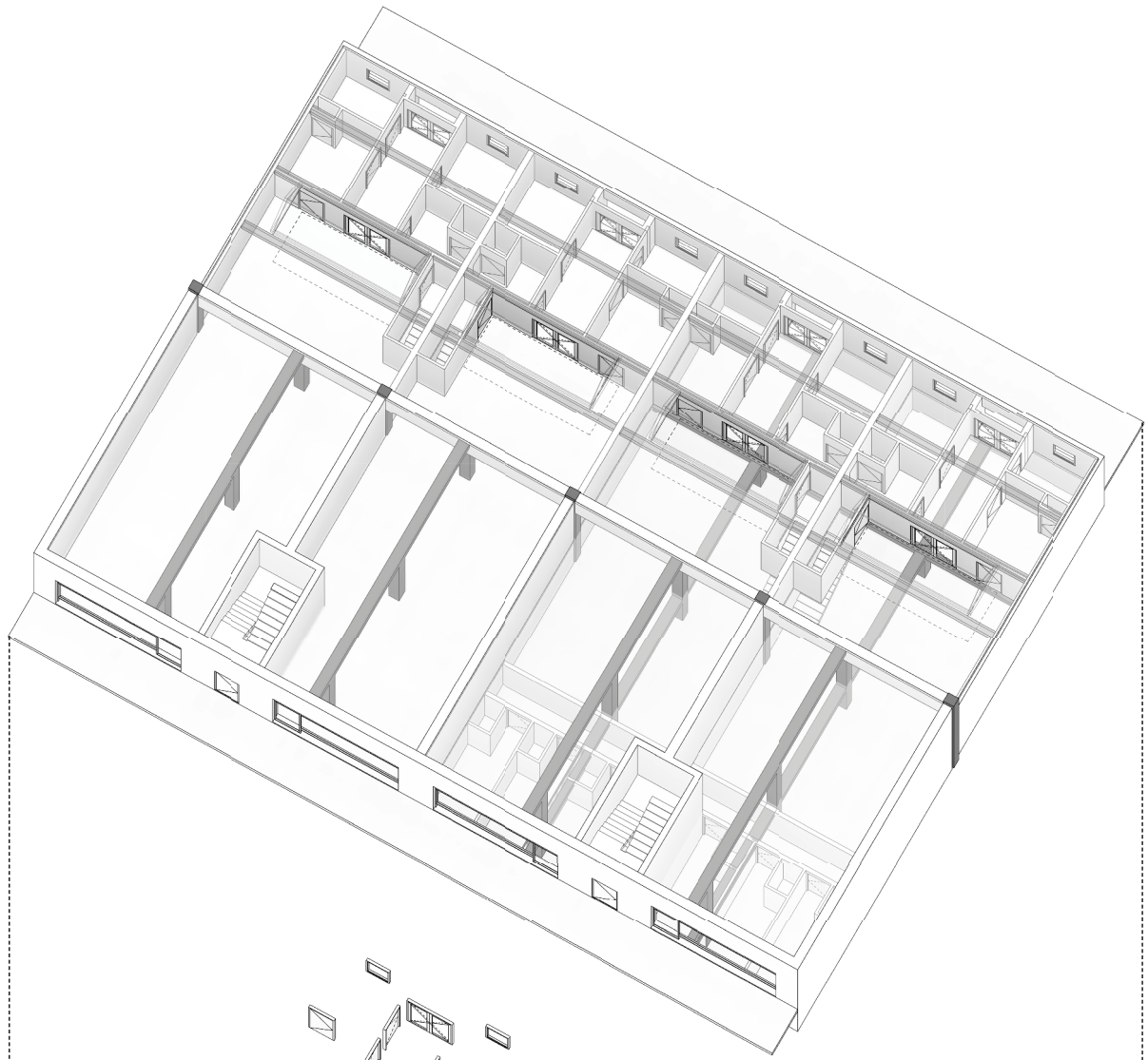
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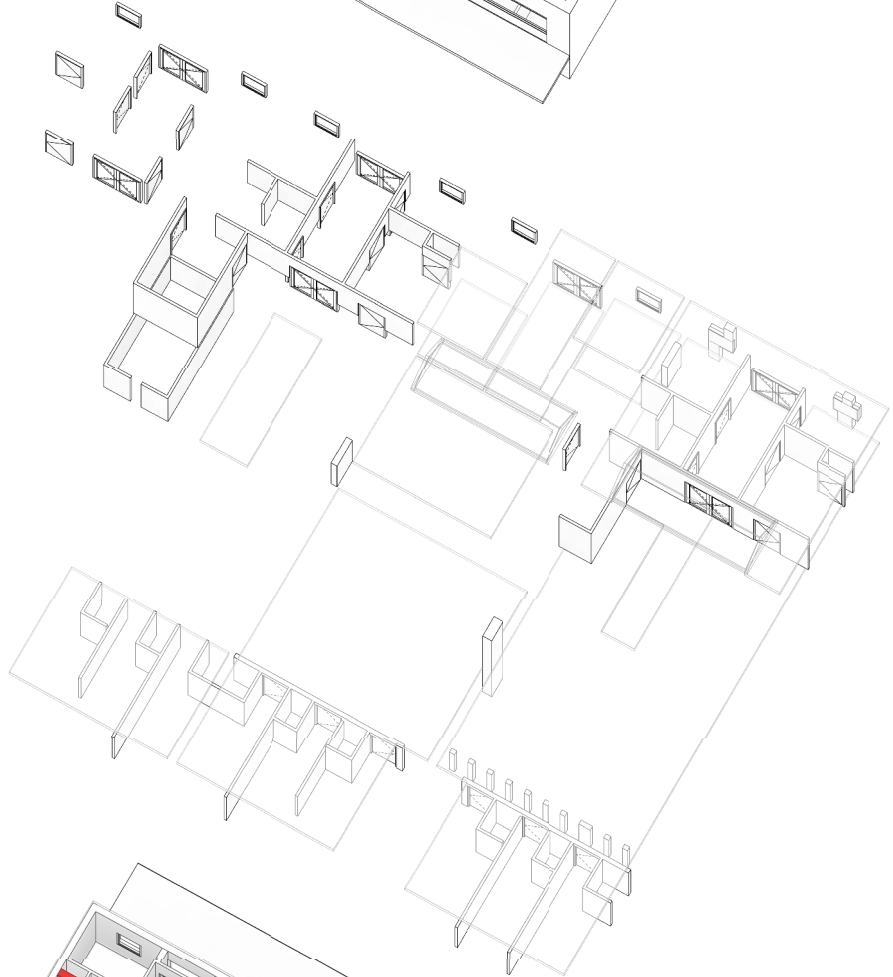
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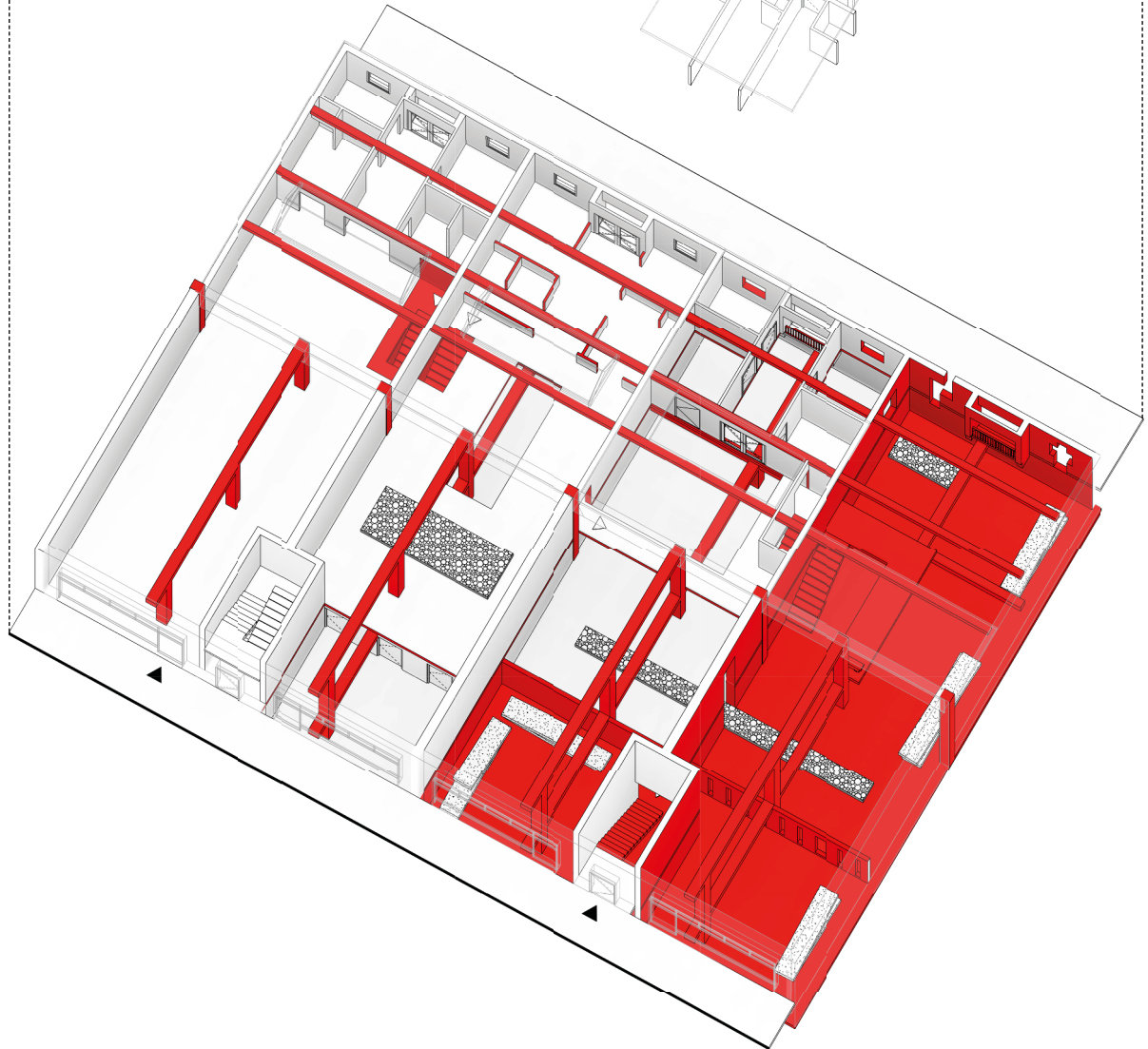
SECTION D



EXISTING

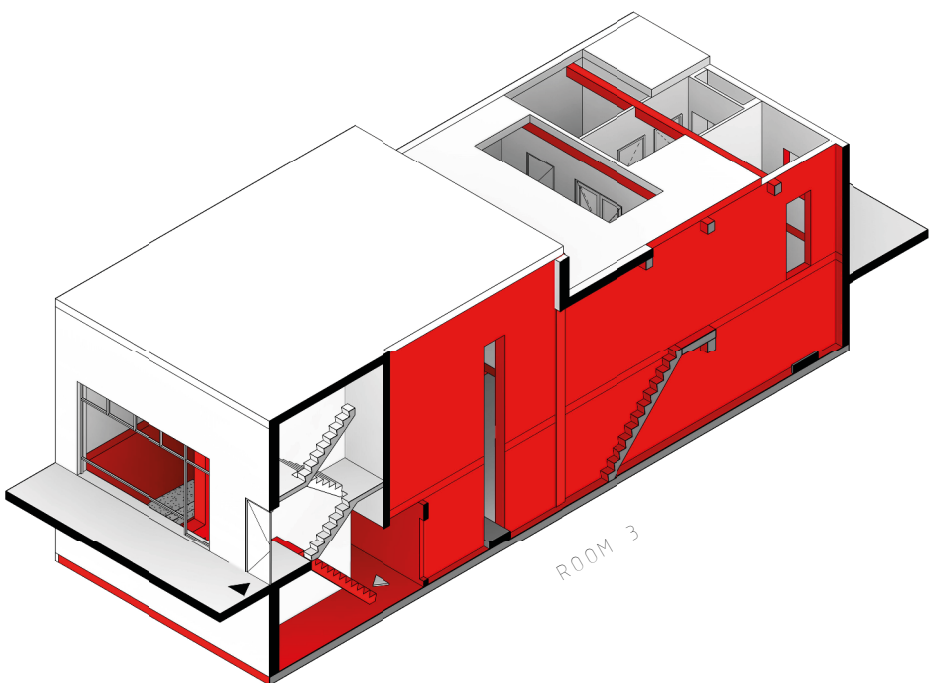
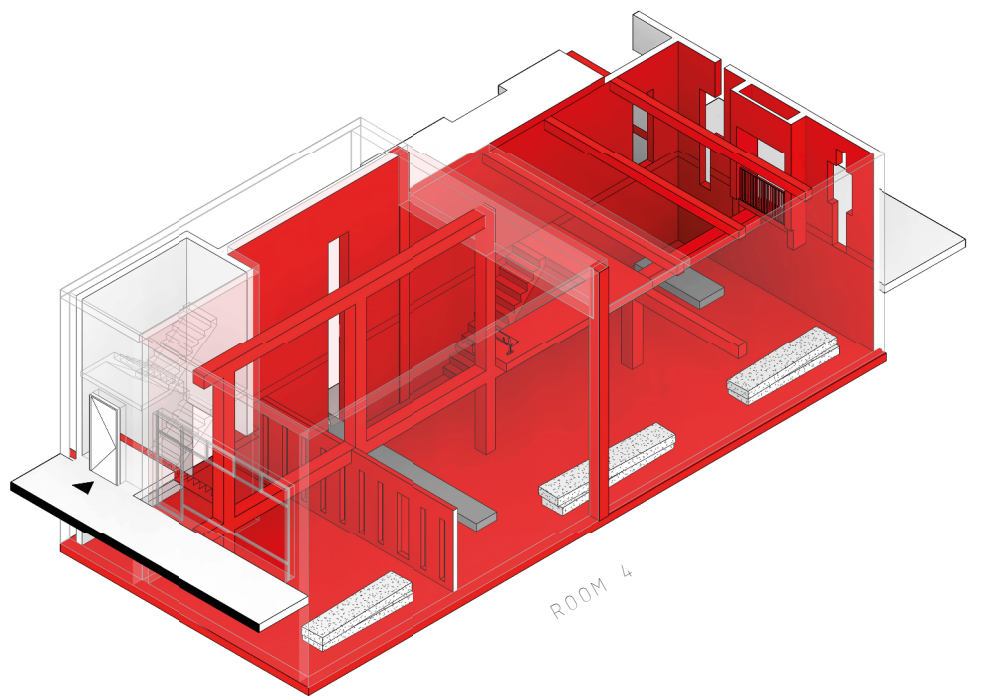
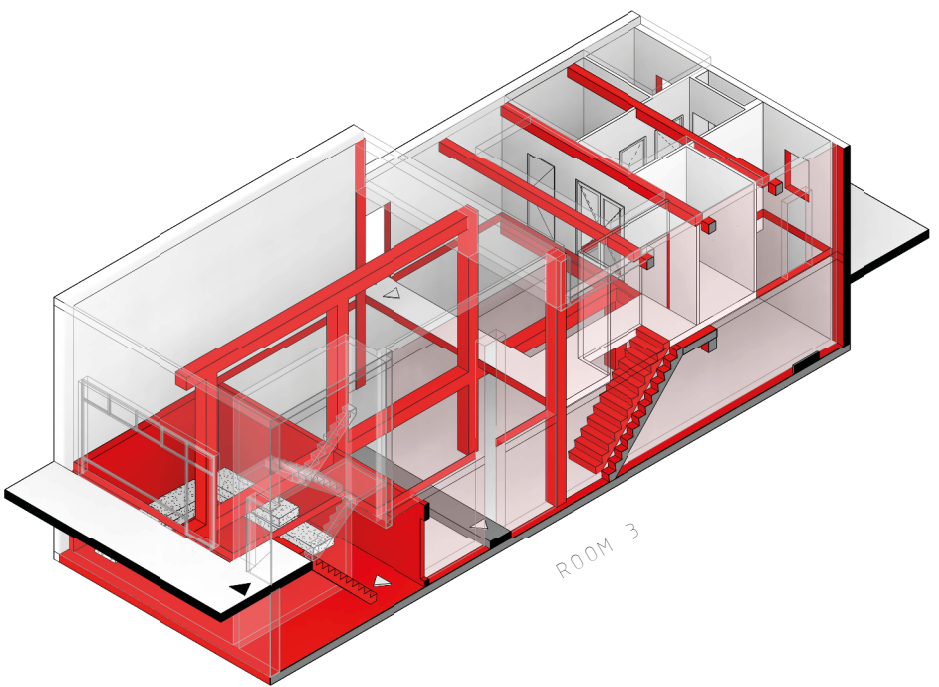
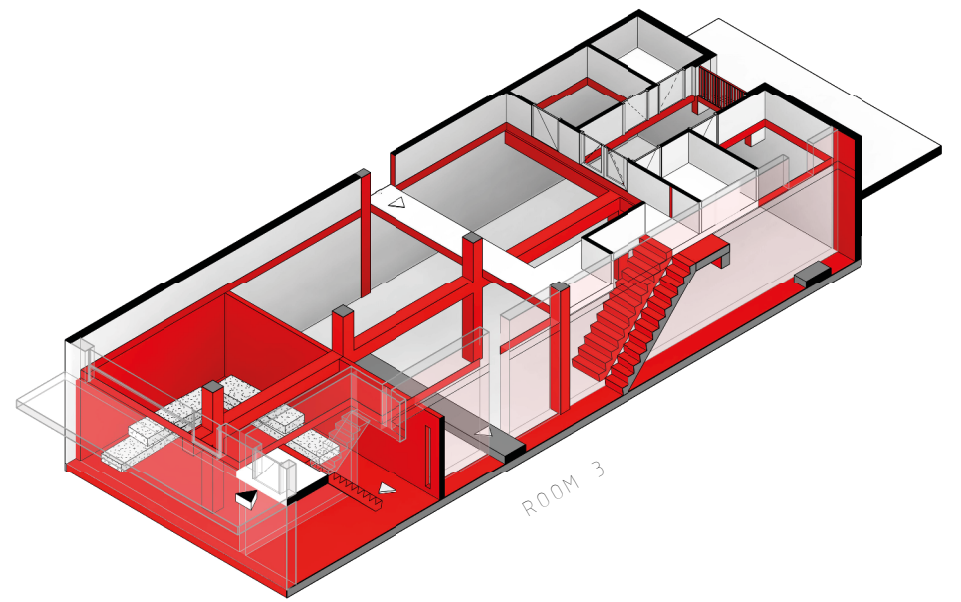
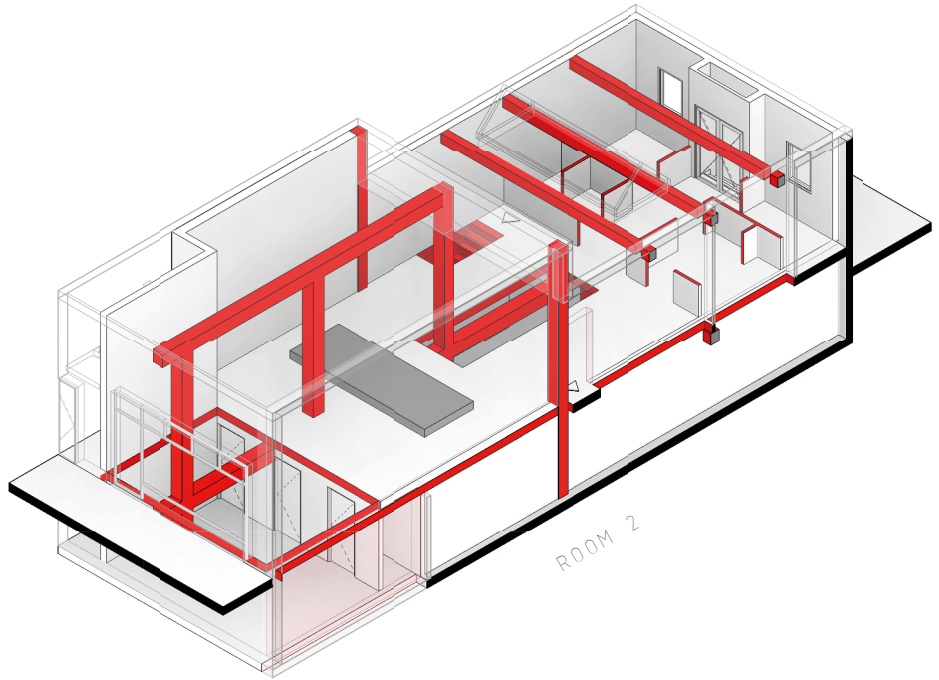
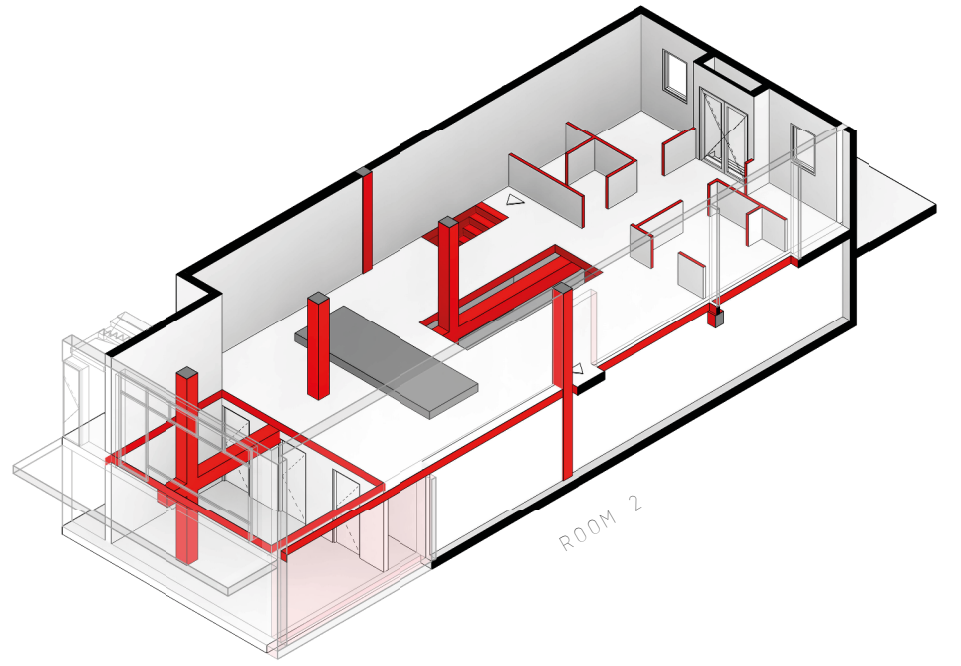
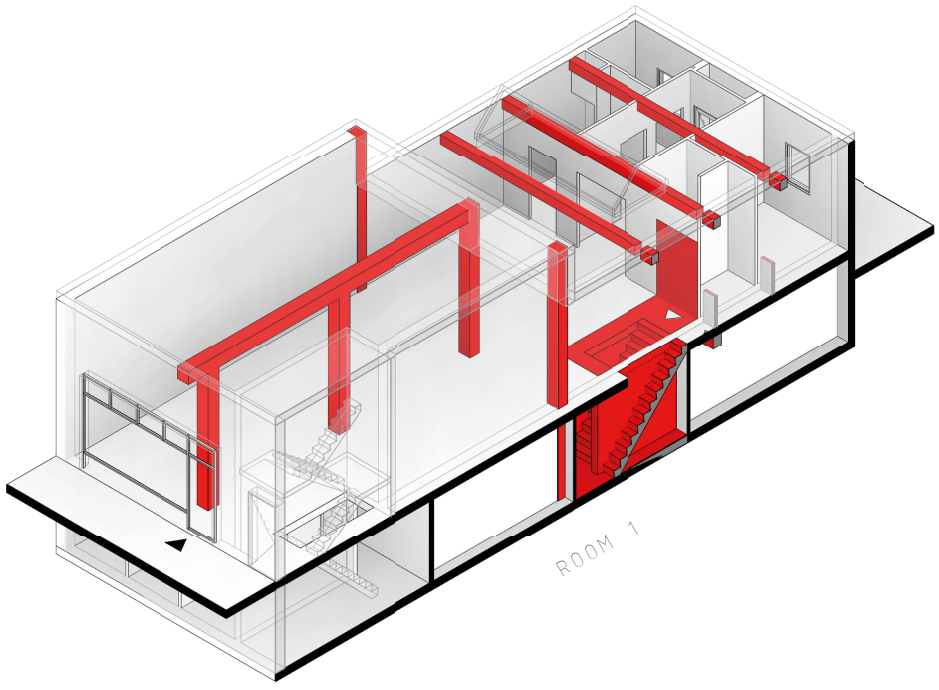


REMOVAL



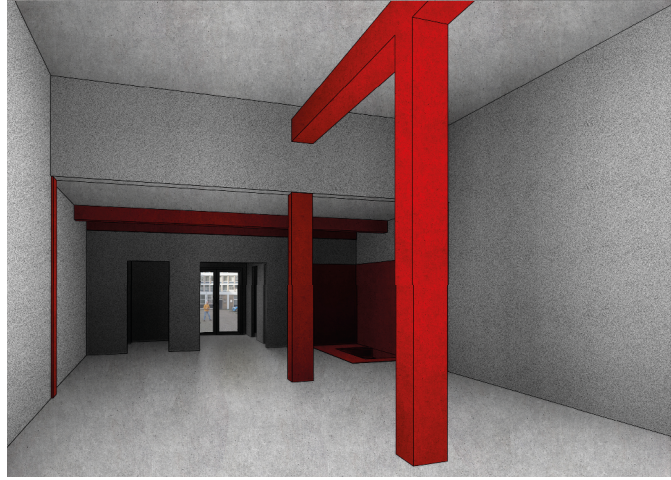
MENDING





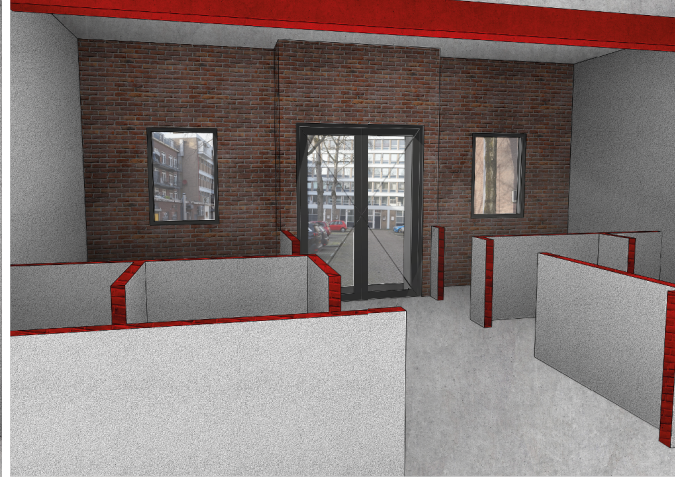


1



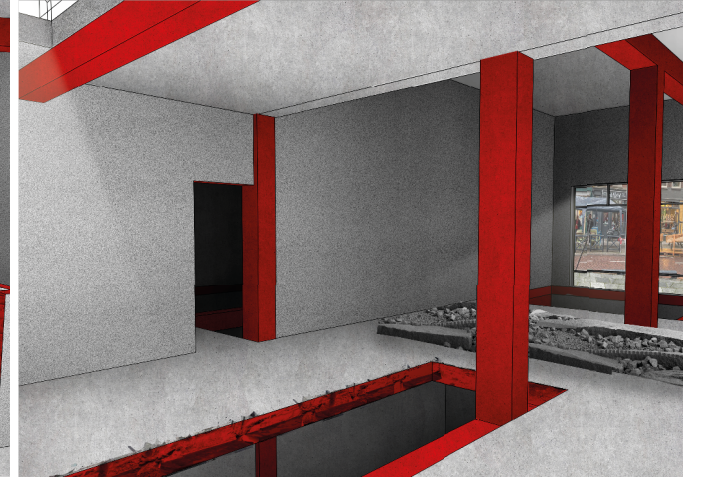
ROOM 1

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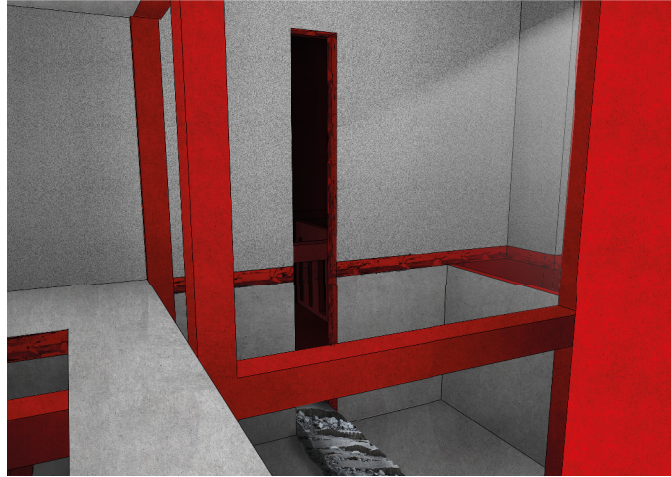
ROOM 2

3



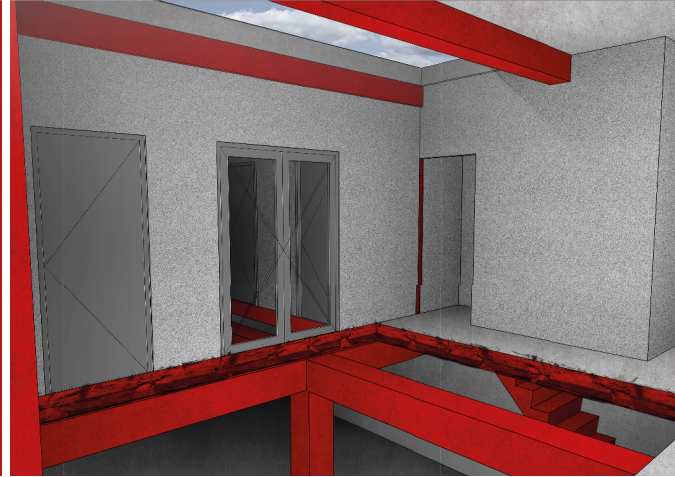
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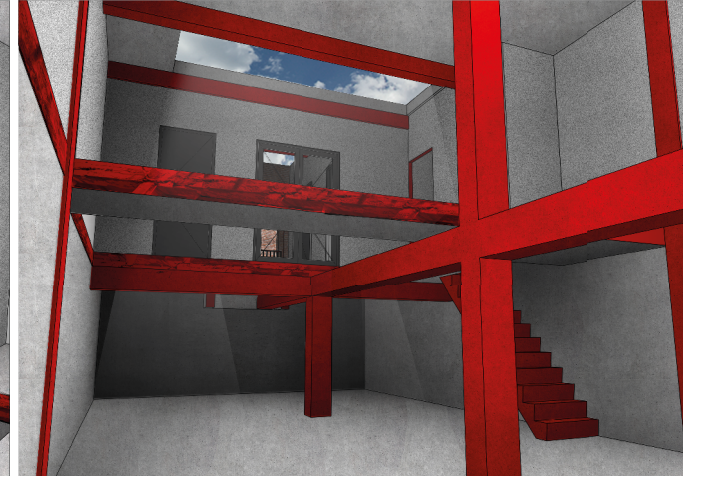
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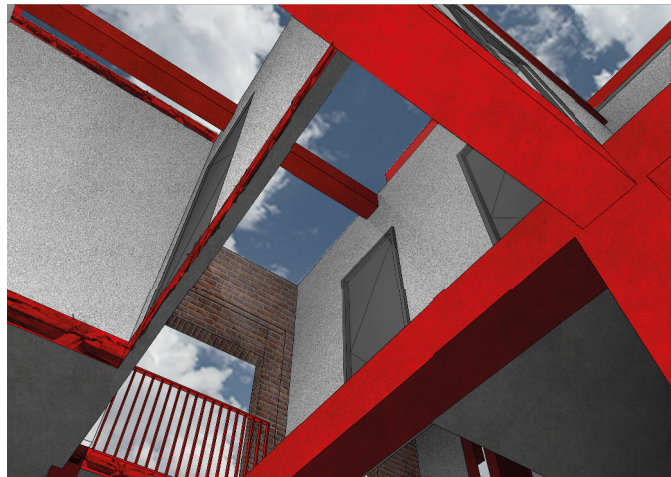
ROOM 3

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ROOM 3

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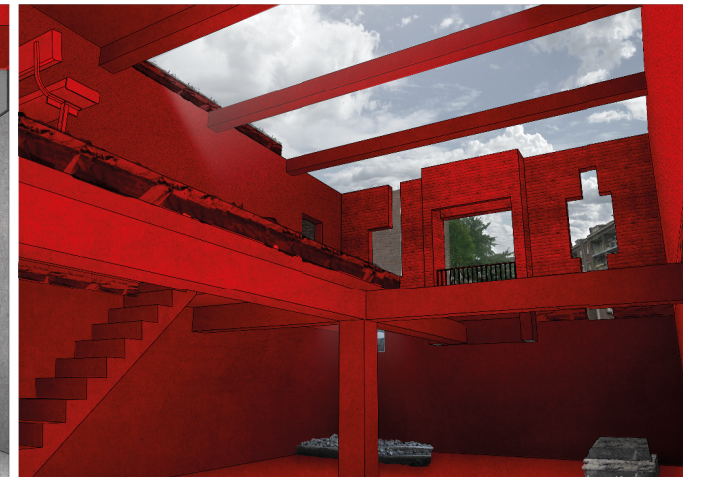
ROOM 3

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ROOM 3

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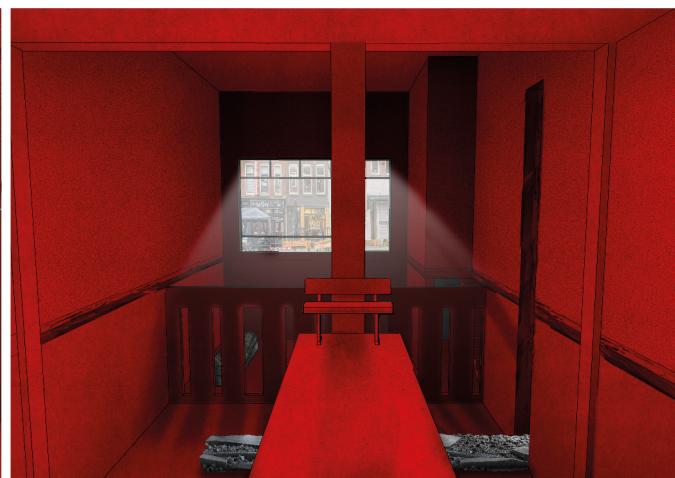
ROOM 4

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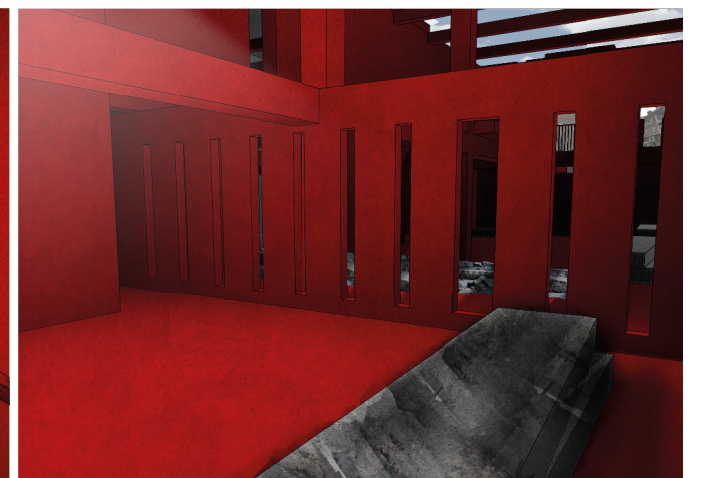
ROOM 4

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ROOM 4

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ROOM 4



