

# MAKING A SCENE

Jelle de Rooij  
RAvB - 3<sup>rd</sup> year  
5<sup>th</sup> studio

## Studio information

The focus of the studio is the design of a set. In the studio we look at sources beyond architecture as a resource for our practice and we work to expand the idea of what architecture can be. We will look at film, set design and scenography and learn from their approaches to narrative, time, space, representation and atmosphere. Parallel to the design studio the students follow the theory course 'Spaces of Cinema' where we watch and analyse films and work to create a theoretical framework for the studio. Each student starts from a chapter from Kafka's The Trial.

Working on the same book establishes a common ground for dialogue among the students. We mine the text for clues and hints on atmosphere, narrative and setting, clues that will be reimagined in the design of a set. At the end of the studio the different sets representing different chapters will recompose an image of the book in its entirety.

The studio trip takes us to three different areas in Brussels. We focus on specific areas moving from bureaucratic and representational spaces, to industrial heritage and picturesque cityscapes. In each area we collect architectural fragments from interiors and exteriors, public and private spaces, with different histories and atmospheres. We look carefully to establish and expand our collection of 'found' architectures. Both material reality and atmosphere are recorded in image and writing during the trip. We build an architectural repertoire made up out of facades, walls, staircases, basements, windows, floors, doors and roofs, to become material at our creative disposal. Back from the trip we will start interrogating the fragments and try to discover new meanings and possibilities. Everything can be turned into something else. Everyday buildings and interiors of past and present are assembled and re-assembled. What is familiar can become foreign, the public becomes private, the monumental minor. We combine the fragments and transform them, using the methods of bricolage and architectural collage to design the sets. Scenographic design strategies are used to reinterpret our found architectures, perspective, colour, texture.

The idea of the stage set will serve as a starting point to address how we can materialize an idea, and how we can use that which is already there; architecture as found as a resource for our design by carefully observing, selecting and transforming. The set designs are then the result of a careful configuration of the different scenes, memories, recollections, reconfigurations, sitting somewhere between the real and the surreal, responding to the source text and its narrative clues. Students will reflect on the typologies they represent: What is a house? What is an office space? How can we represent them? When we rearrange the fragments into a new whole, we pay close attention to the physical and conceptual connection between the parts.

## Tutors

Claudio Saccucci  
Roxane van Hoof  
Bas Leemans  
Riccardo De Vecchi

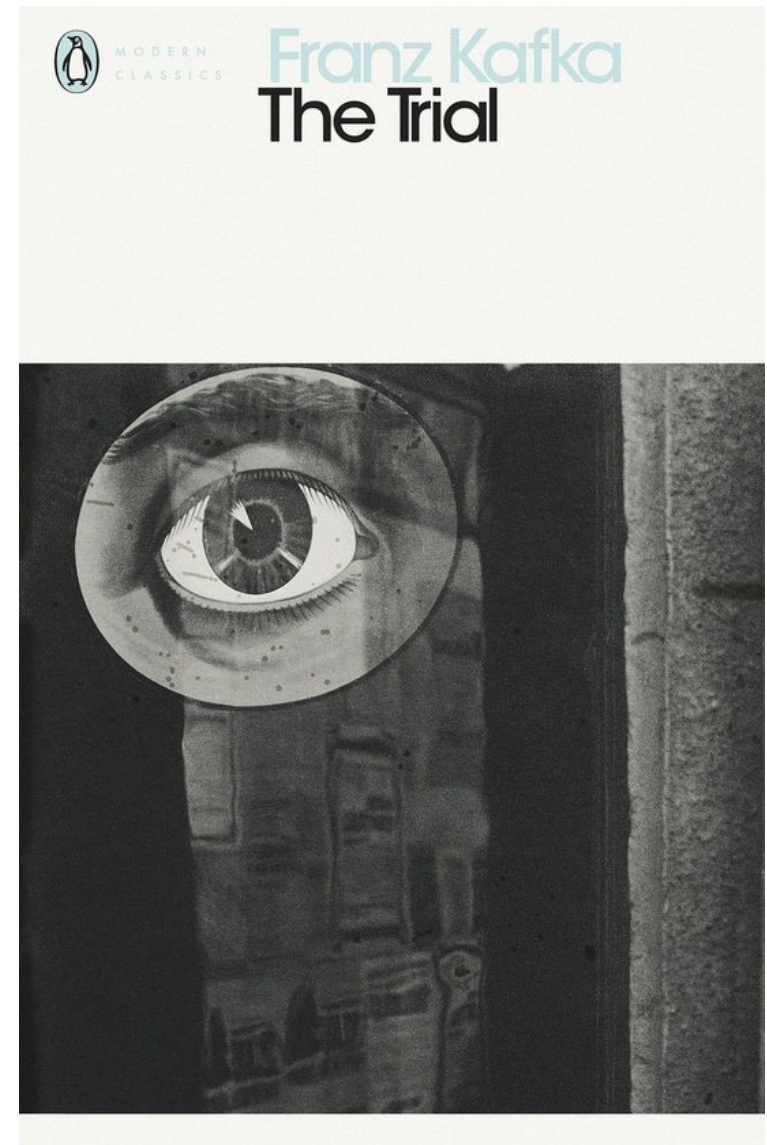


## The book

The book 'The Trial' is about a man who is accused of a crime but never learns what this crime is. He navigates the world of the justice system trying to find answers for himself.

The chapter that i got assigned is about the whipper. The scene is set at his job, a bank, where he is working late. He goes for a walk and hears a scuffle, leading him to a unused messroom. He opens the door and sees the two policemen who arrested him being flogged. Never actually stepping into the room he starts a dialogue with the flogger and his victims, talking about reasons why this his happening and their future. Jozef K. needs to close the door again and leaves. The next day he is again working late and after peeks into the room, again seeing the men standing in the middle ready to be flogged. He screams and demands that his clerks clean the room the next day.

For me this chapter is about Jozef K's life and how the trial is encroaching upon it. It also almost seems dreamlike since they are there again the next day. We never learn any more than this, what happens to the policemen or if the room is cleaned and empty. His next days could be either filled with peace or suspense, anxiety and un-ease. Ever the possibility that he opens a door and sees the flogger and his victims.



### Trip to Brussels

The trip to Brussels was about taking photographs of different elements of buildings that correspond to the atmosphere in your chapter. Because my chapter is about aloofness, certainty and the invasiveness of the trail I focused on elements that convey interior to exterior relation. Also the meaning of tension is something that becomes apparent in this chapter, the way that Jozef does not enter the room but neither leaves raises the tension to a certain degree.







The pictures I selected ultimately convey a feeling of uneasy, like the scene has not yet finished being constructed. The materials convey expensive and luxurious taste, the empty marble farming feels cold and inhuman. Furthermore the different door frame and windows all show something behind them, either closed or open, which has meaning and is something I want to use in my model. Because the frame is of such importance in my chapter, he never leaves the door frame, I want to create small frames that convey the whole story.



### Trying compositions

The next assignment was about creating a composition using different elements from the chosen pictures. How would you imagine a set conveying the message in the chapter? What would a floor look like? What would the door be made out of? I've used images of Anna Viebrock her work as references and tried to give meaning to form, composition and material used.



The most 'promising' composition that I made, the different perspectives and hallways signify the different paths that Jozef K. can take in life, but that they ultimately end in the same way. I've also used the same material on the wall as a way to show that the trial is invading his personal life.





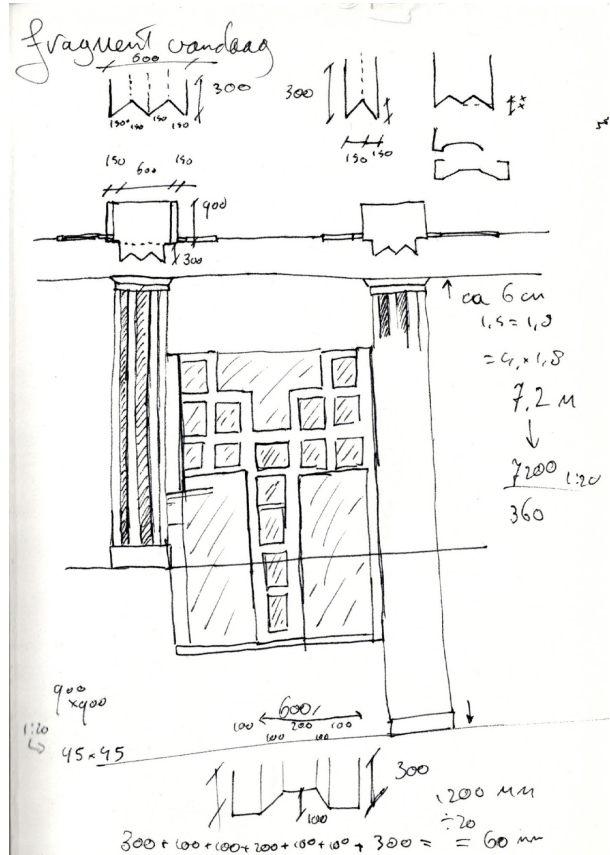
Other compositions that I made, focusing on the infinity hallway and a recursion mold, where every look through the window would show the same result. These were good tries, but in the end they did not fully encapsulate the atmosphere from the book. Either the different worlds were not colliding enough, there were no connections or it was way too busy with materials en facades.



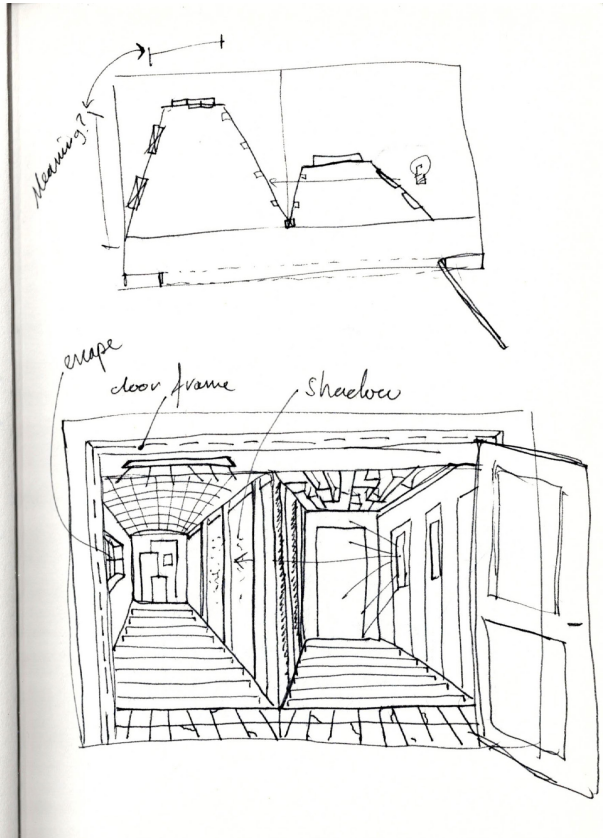
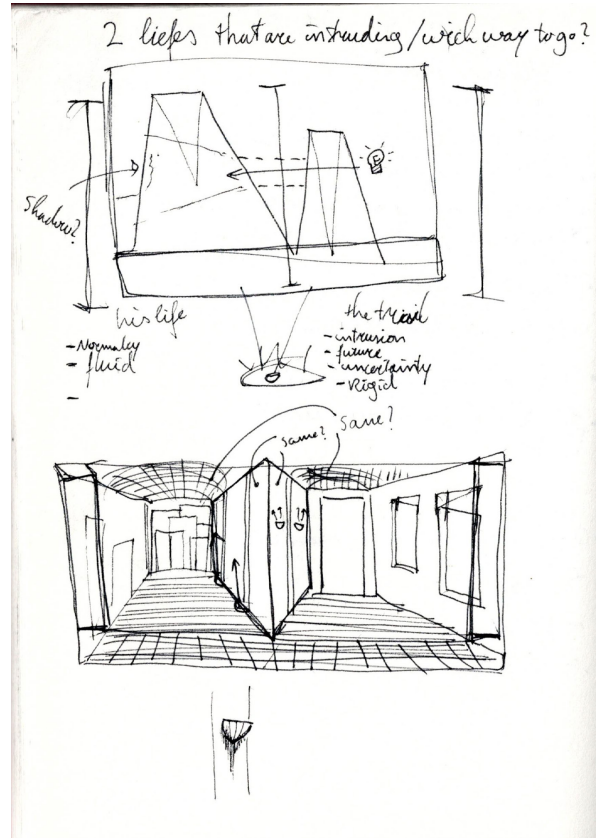
Try-outs for a way to make my forced perspective hallway

### Model fragments

I tried to make an complete 'try-out' for my model, making several sketches how my model should look and how my picture would finish. After that I made a different kind of composition, focusing on different levels of depth and how to combine this with a forced perspective.

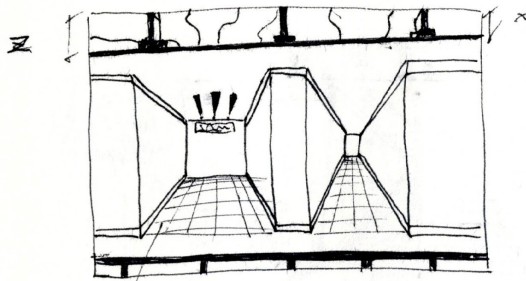
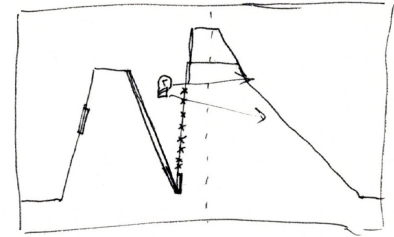
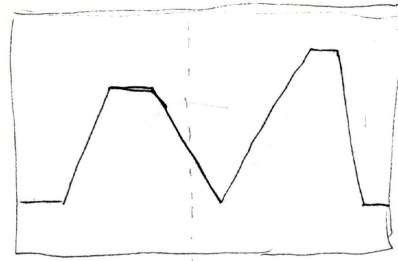
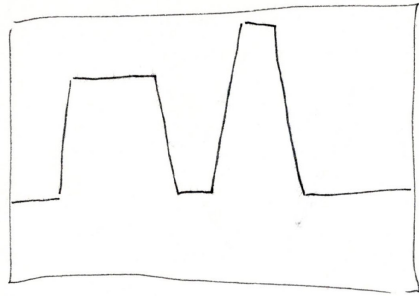


calculations and dimensions for the columns that I want to use in my model

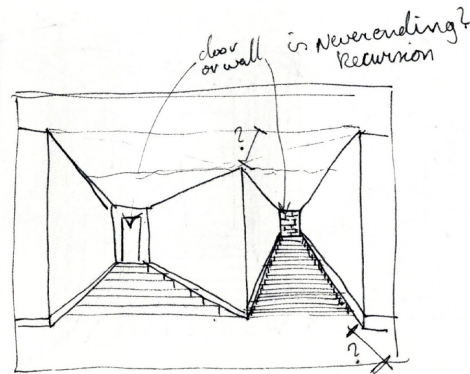


2 different setups of forced perspective scale models and the preferred photo that would be the result. In these versions I tried to incorporate the element of lighting and the use of shadows. This combined with doors/windows that let the light through so to create the visual image of a certain aspect of his life, either the trial or his banking job to shine through.

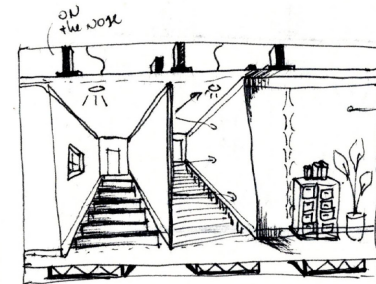




no stairs?



door or wall is never ending?  
Recurson



on the nose

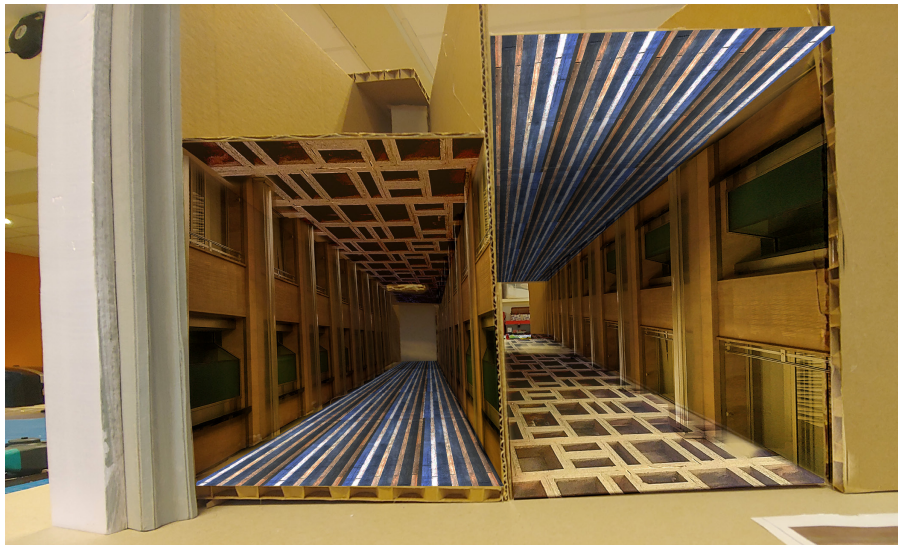
what kind of wallpaper?

Setup where I want to show the difference in forced perspective and perhaps some 'stage lights' to signify that our whole life, and Jozef K's life, is merely a setup by the global elite to make us do their bidding. It is the illusion of choice, where the only outcome is death, no matter how you slice it.

These 2 setups are to determine a forced perspective with a 'missing' wall. Something that you are unable to see due to the fact that you are way off to the side and thus can only see the endpoint of the hall. The other wall would be open and fitted with a light to create shadows/lights on the other wall. I've tried to combine this with the 'stage lights' and fabric to create a more artificial look.



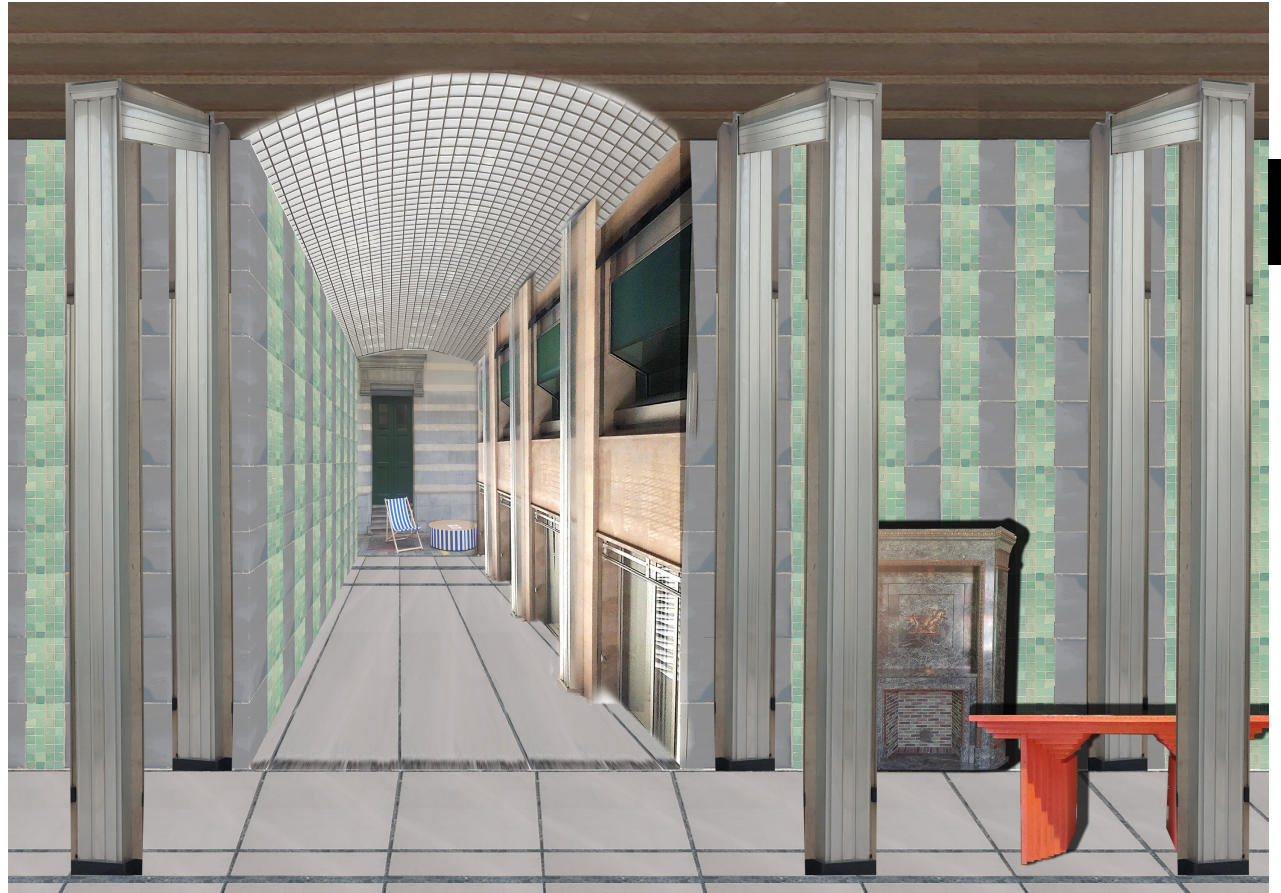
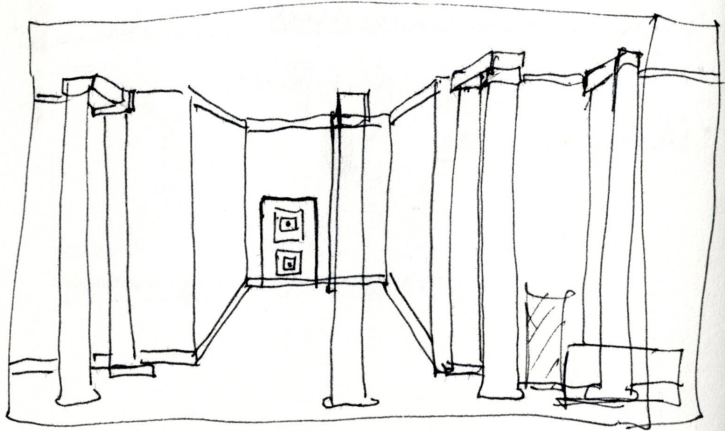
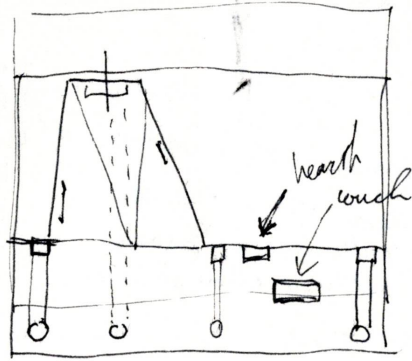
*This test of my model features a column and two forced perspectives. I've already made the basis for the model, a 'box' measuring 500 x 500 x 750 mm, and put these tests on this. A comment from my tutor's was about the amount of material in a scene. Having too much can be way to crowded. To further expand on this I a photoshopped version of this model*



*This image shows the possibilities of the forced perspective. Whilst I think it is way to noisy and can definitely do with some more cleanup and having a more finished look, I am happy with this test. The real issue I have is how the materials don't look the part. It is supposed to be clean and stately, but these floors and ceilings look dirty and dangerous. This is not the atmosphere in the chapter and this is why I tried more setup*

*After these tests I looked again at some work of Anna Viebrock and coma to a new conclusion, I needed a point of 'relaxation'. Somewhere for your eyes to linger and dwell. This brought me to my next composition.*





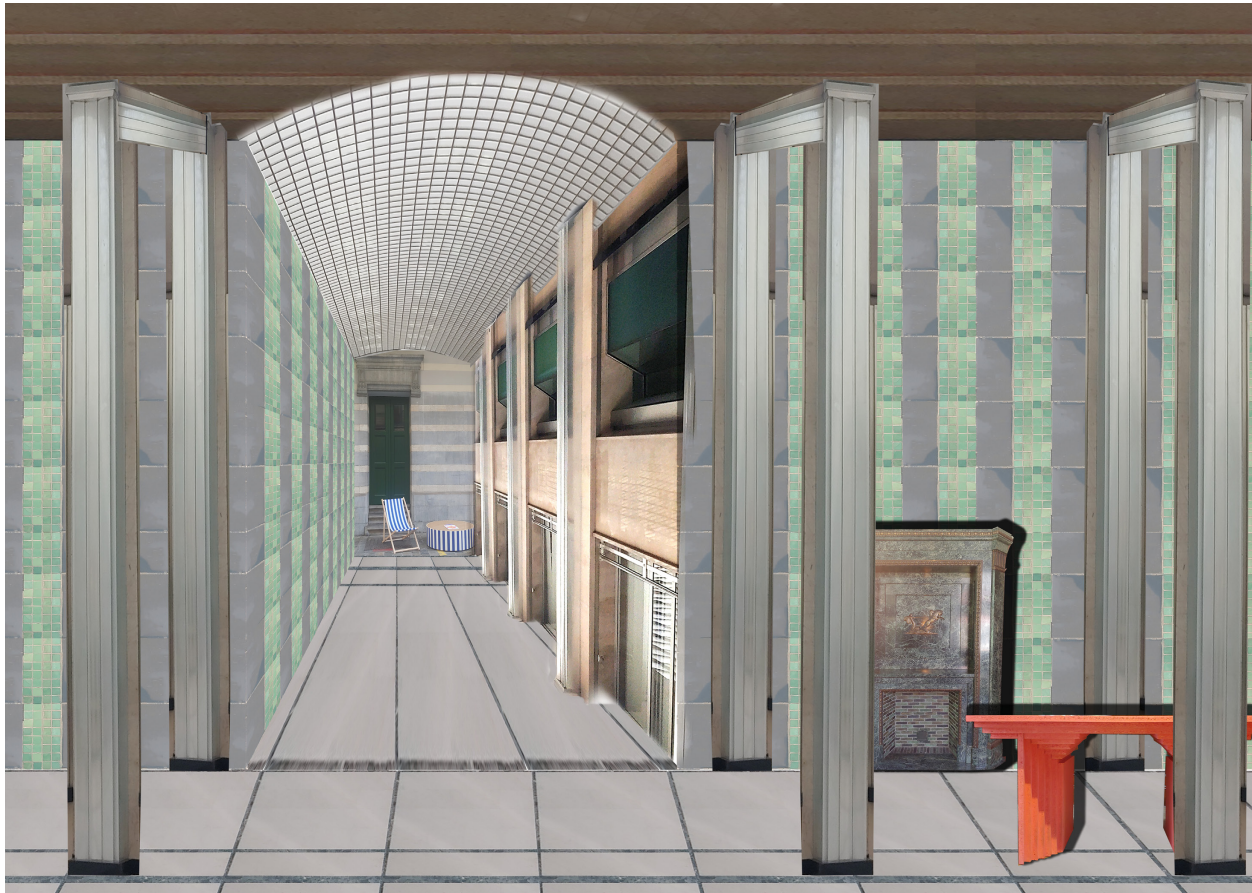
*This image is the result of my forced perspective tests and looking at references. Taking heavy influence from the scene in the book and how I imagine the banking building is situated. A large central hall with different wings, and at the end of each wing a 'mess room'. The room where clerks leave their bikes, cleaning supplies are stored, secrets are forgotten and Jozef K finds the first intrusion of the trial into his life.*

## Final model test



*New material for the wall, a more 'bank-like' finish, furnishing that befits money and pillars that can hold the giant ceiling. This is the image that I see before me.*





*...We'd cleaned the room, scrubbed floors and fitted a new lock. Yet, mr. K kept pacing about, opening the door at odd times and peering in. Always quickly closing the door and leaving...*

Exerpt of a statement from a bank clerk after mr. K his sentencing.

## The Messroom

A point of no return, something set in motion by his own (in)action, the room is a constant reminder to Jozef K. that the trial is now part of his life. Peeping eyes from upstairs offices watch his movement towards an empty room, the door ajar with light shining out from it. Perhaps a trick of the light? Opening the door and quickly closing it, habit or resisting the urge to step in and enter the room?

Soft spoken and always working late, Mr Jozef K. stalks this wing of the building. Roaming about the marble floors, telling all and every clerk he meets to "clean the room in the back". Never showing dissatisfaction of the task, perhaps, incorrectly completed, he keeps on asking. The clerks have learned to avoid this wing at night, instead keeping to the central hall if they are called to another office.

The only reminder of this is the building itself. Dimly lit offices forming a frame around the dreaded room, the hall stretching out seemingly without end and a small light coming from the ajar door.

## Final model test

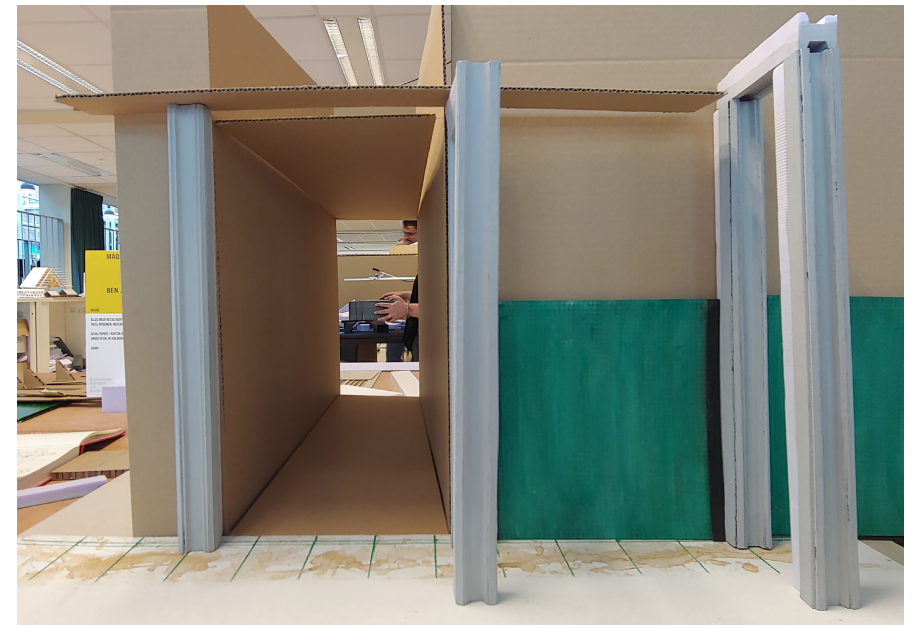
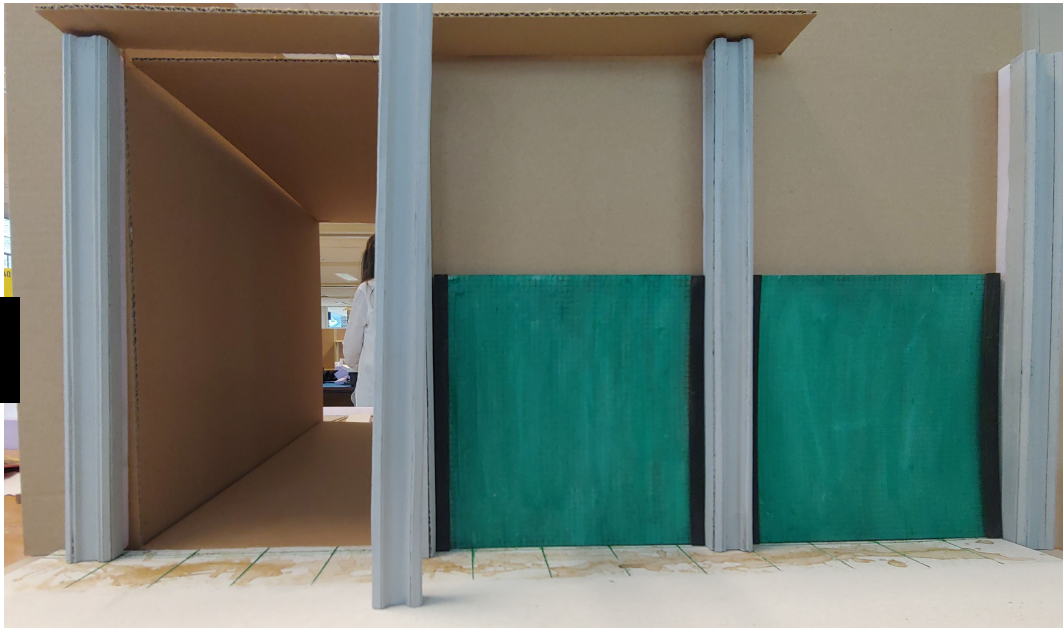


The tests for the use of material and perspective went great. The colour and composition are a good fit for the set. Also the columns that I made give a good sense of scale to the first layer of the set. This increases the effectiveness of the forced perspective hallway.

Something that did not work however, was the spacing of the set. There was too large an empty wall and too small a hallway. I tried to fix this using different compositions: Making the hallway more to the side, but this obstructed the side wall view and erased the sense of perspective. Then I tried to move the hallway more to the centre of the set but a column now was 'in the way' of the picture. So my last effort was to increase the width of the hallway. This allowed me to show the different finishes on the hallway walls and still have the forced perspective.

On the next page I've shown the different set-ups.





- ◀◀ *Perspective way too skewed towards the side, no sideview of the hallway and 'missing' a wall.*
- ▲ *Shifted hallway where you see both walls but a column on the forefront almost obstructs your view of the walls.*
- ◀ *Correct set-up where you see both walls, no columns obstruct this and there is still enough 'relaxation' space for your eyes.*



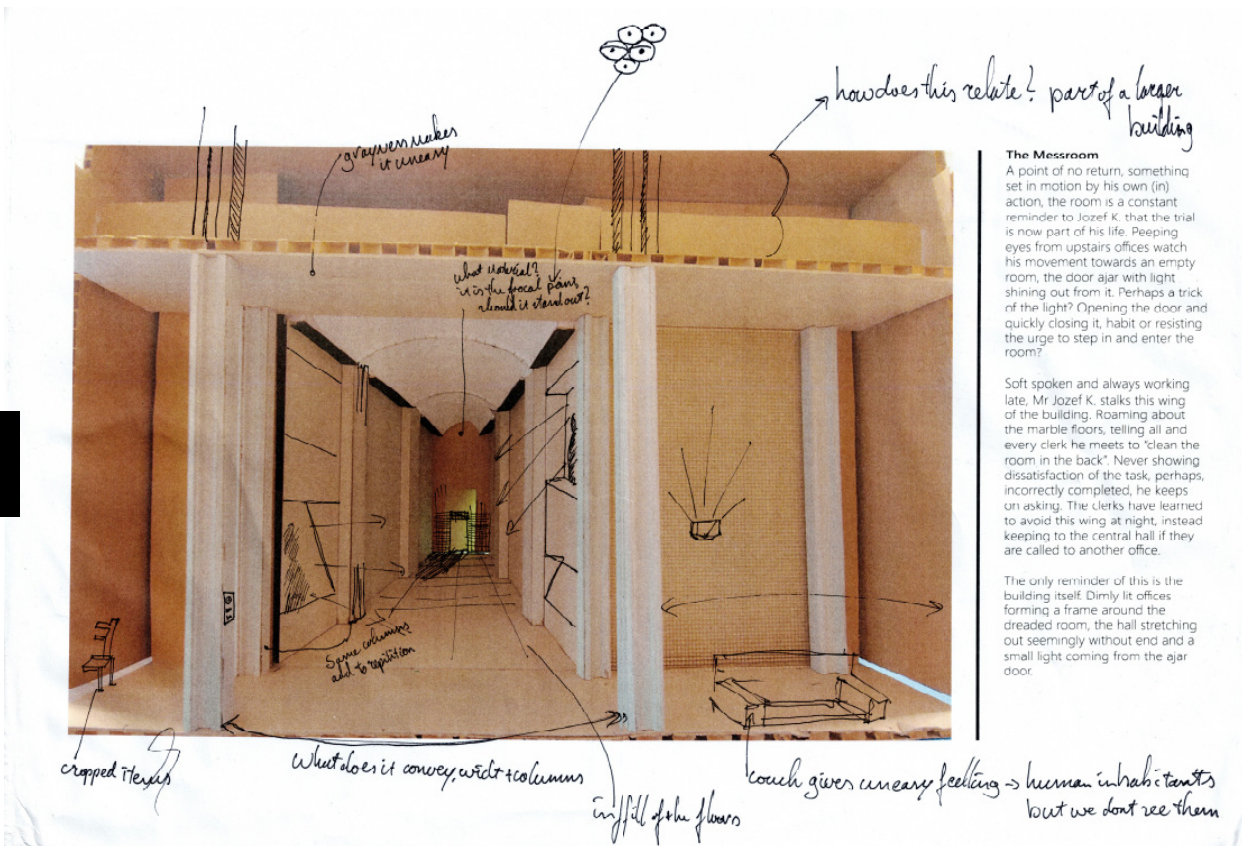


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During the mid of term presentation I presented the model to my tutors and the outside lecturer.

Their feedback was positive, the story that I present resonate with both the story and the model that I made. Our main discussion was about a way to decorate the interior and focus on the feeling I want to convey. This meant that I should explore what kind of material to use, what the finish is on the walls. Furthermore, the use of furniture is also important in my model. As I can use it to strengthen the perspective shift in the hallway.

I should also work on the bigger picture, is there something to put on the top 'row'? What would the building look like when there was something on top? Is this the same building, do you see the roof of the hallway, how can you increase the feeling of uneasiness? Also the lighting is something to think of now, what light should come from where?



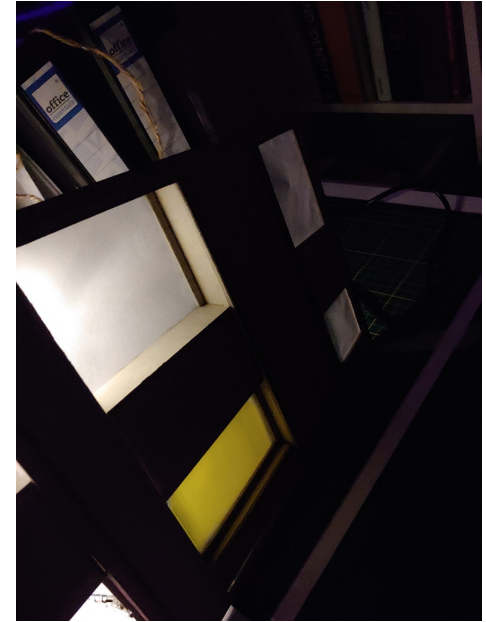
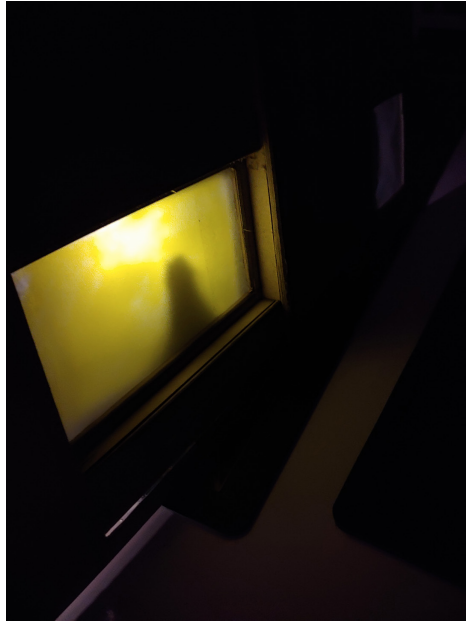
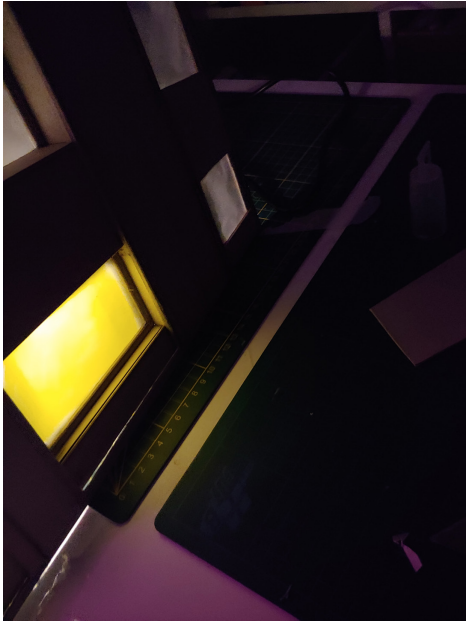
## The perspective hallway



The infill for the hallway is based upon the corridors from the justice building in Brussels. I've made large sills and windows to try to give a large area for light to shine through. The columns in the hallway were profiled to look just like the columns on the 'outside' of the hallway.







Lighting tests to make shadows of people watching the onlooker. Also tried different lighting colours, yellow and white light.

## Flooring test



The flooring in my model is supposed to be luxurious. Since he works at a bank I wanted to convey this feeling of wealth, unattainable power and the mess that bureaucracy can be. For the wealthy look I went with marble. Red.

This is in contrast to the green walls. The small little tiles that I used as my reference also have this 'expensive' atmosphere.



The marble itself is actually paper that has a marble finish. This is achieved by hydro dipping the paper in coloured paint and water. The different tests are to decide which is the most fitting method of creating marble 'slabs'. I've tried this with pencil in the ridges, paint in the ridges, white out in the ridges and using a file to etch ridges. This last method proved the best so I continued to use this for my whole flooring.





▲ *Tryouts for the photo*

▶ *Tryout for the backwall, the focus of the . I tried to make a fleshy texture, one where the floor transforms into the wall to symbolize the endlessness of his job and futile fight against the system.*



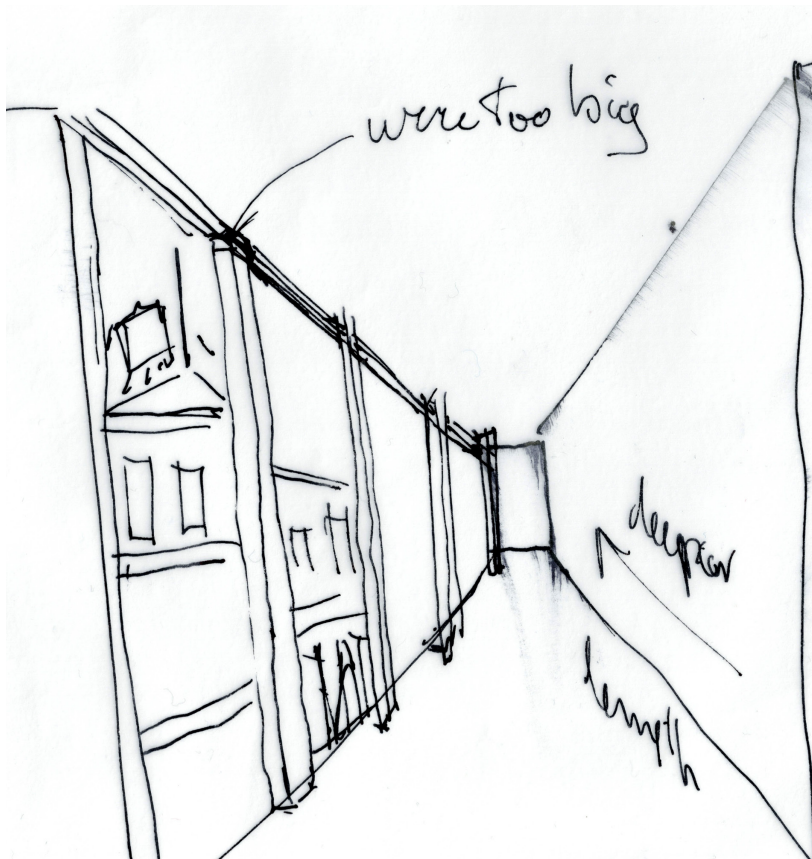


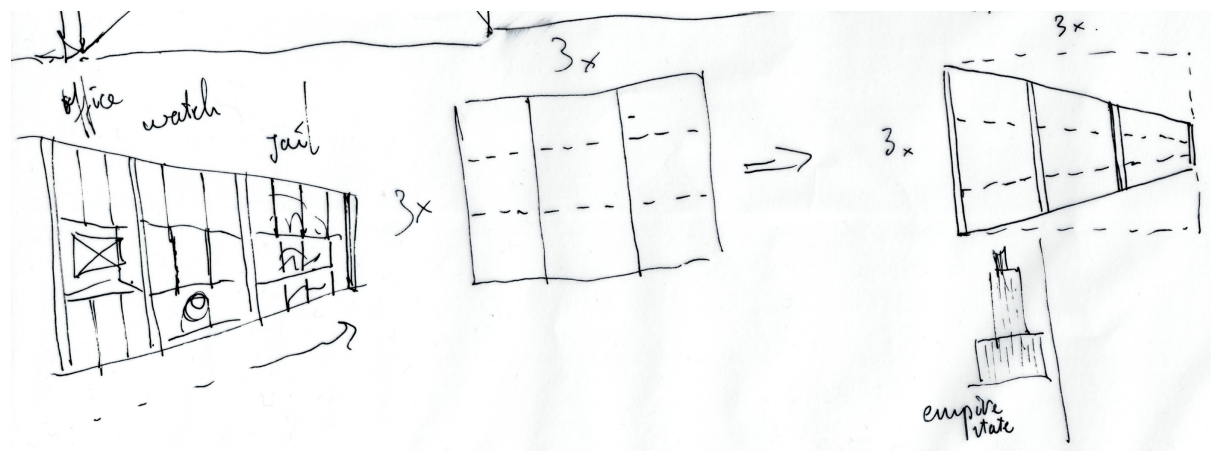
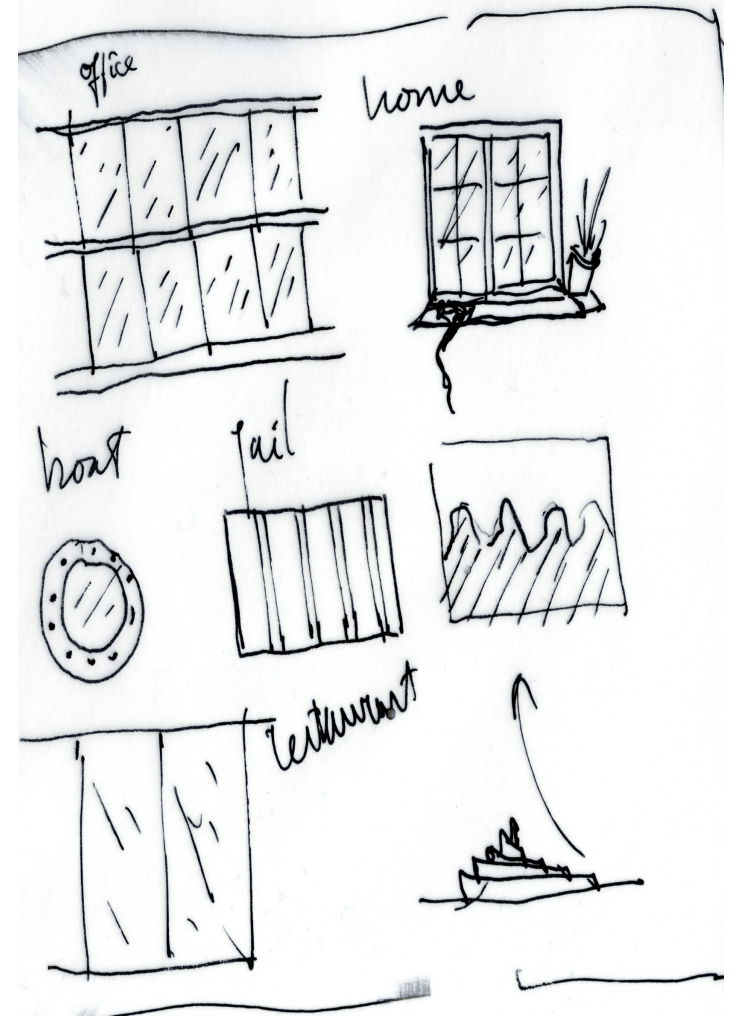
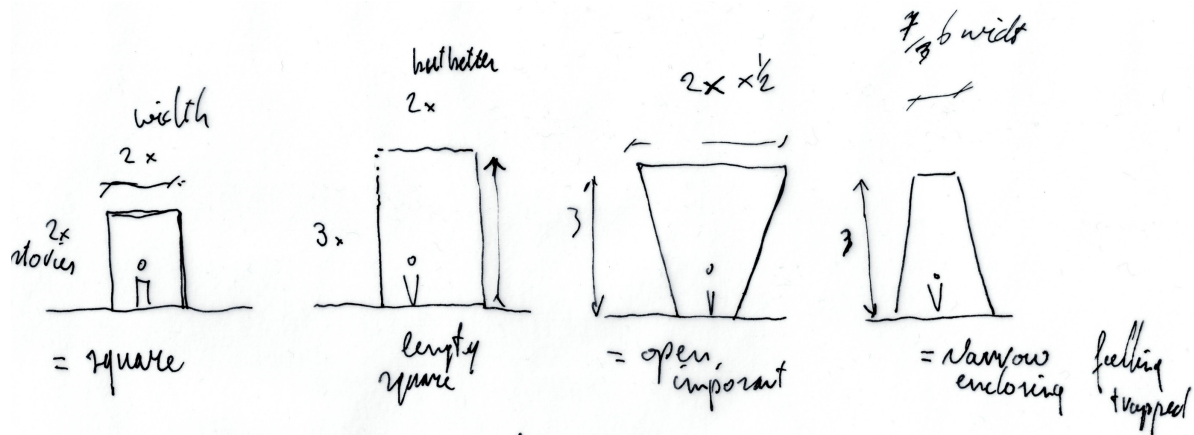
### Change of plans

I spent this week some time with my outside mentor, and he asked some hard hitting questions. "Why are they office windows?" "They do not look like the reference you provided?"

This in turn formed the question: What is an office window? For this I went sketching and looked through my photo's of Brussels to see if there was anything I could use.

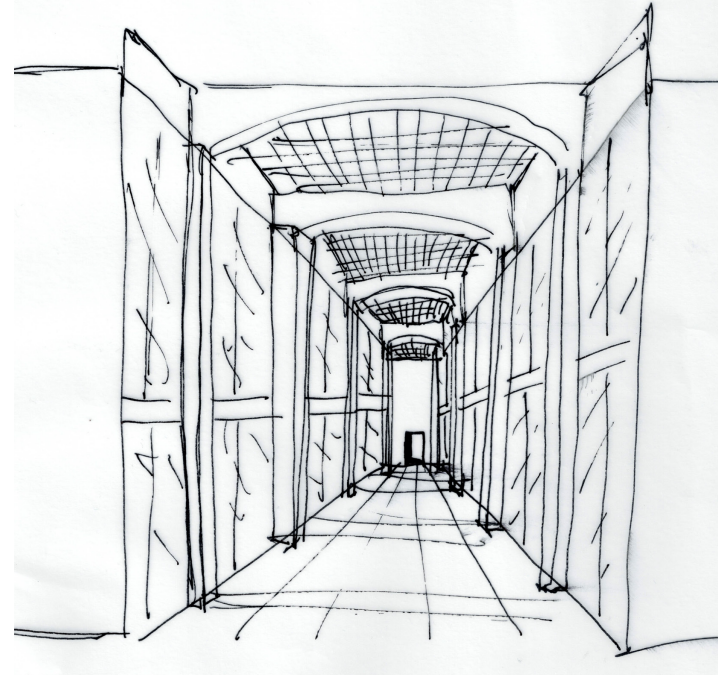
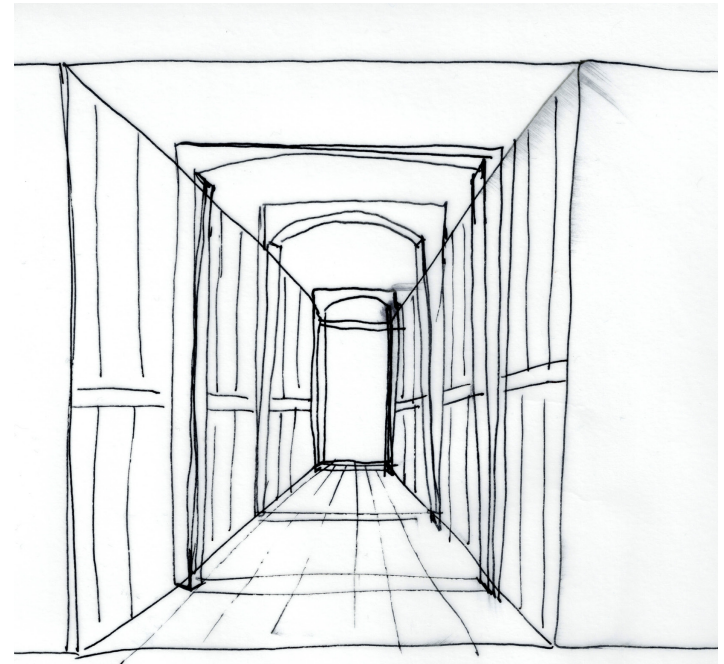
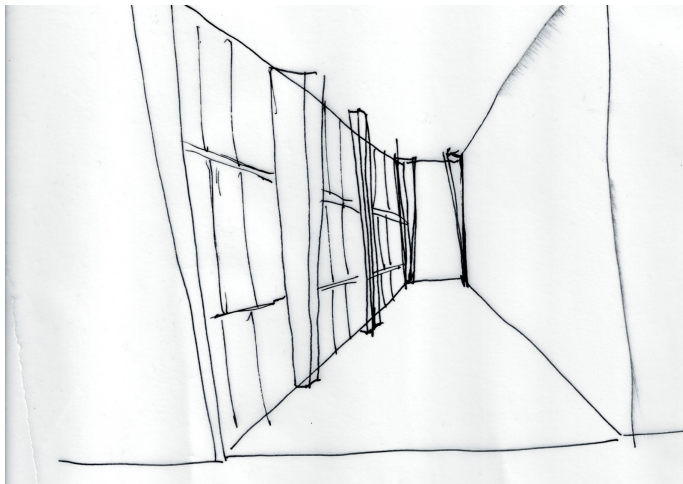
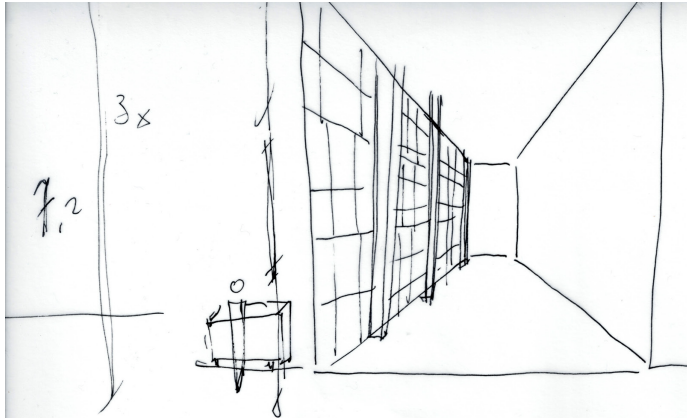
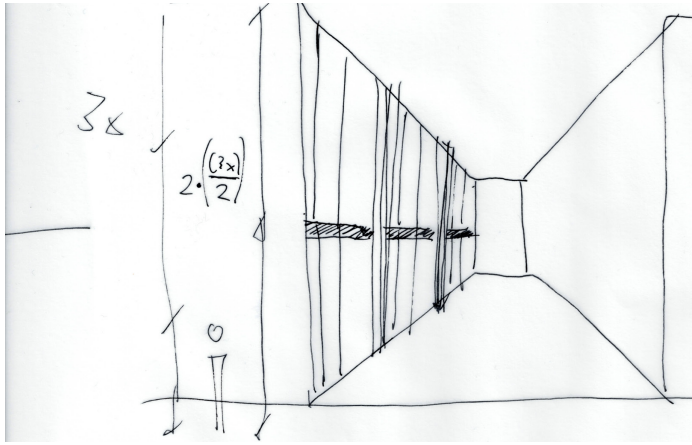
I settled on the picture on the right, an office building with a glass facade. The long vertical lines with horizontal bands to conceal the floors are a perfect metaphor for the monotony of the office windows.







# Endless walls





▲ The first test with the new walls do show them as infinite. The camera is angled much higher so you see the whole of the floor and backwall. But, as you see in the next picture, this is not the same with the camera setup.

▲► When you look at 'camera' height, the walls that are setup are not 'infinite' you see the top of the walls. But this serves as a good test to check if this narrower and more askew flooring works. The hallway looks much more impressive, much more to scale with the perspective look

► Taking a page out of the book of margriette, I painted this tryout for the backwall where my door is showing. The reason I have this 'air' as a backwall is to deepen the abstract meaning of the piece. It also serves as the main focus point for your gaze.

►► My top rafter was doing nothing. Ricardo advised to also use this space to continue the abstract feeling in my maquette by way of adding a corridor of offices. Run of the mill standard.







*New pictures with the walls that extend all the way into the air.  
Tryout with the light coming from the top*



*New pictures with the walls that extend all the way into the air.  
Darker image, with the lights in the pillars on and a doorway  
made in the last sky wall.*





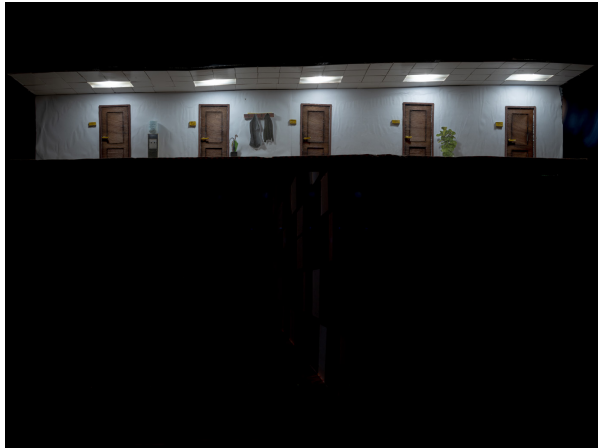
*Closeup of trying with the new walls, added a filter to the light to keep it yellow*



*Last picture of all the added elements, ready to take the final picture.*

**Composite picture**

Together with Ricardo I made the next pictures, these will be used to make my final picture. This is a composite picture that Ricardo puts together so as to have a general feel in all the pictures.





Final picture .jpg

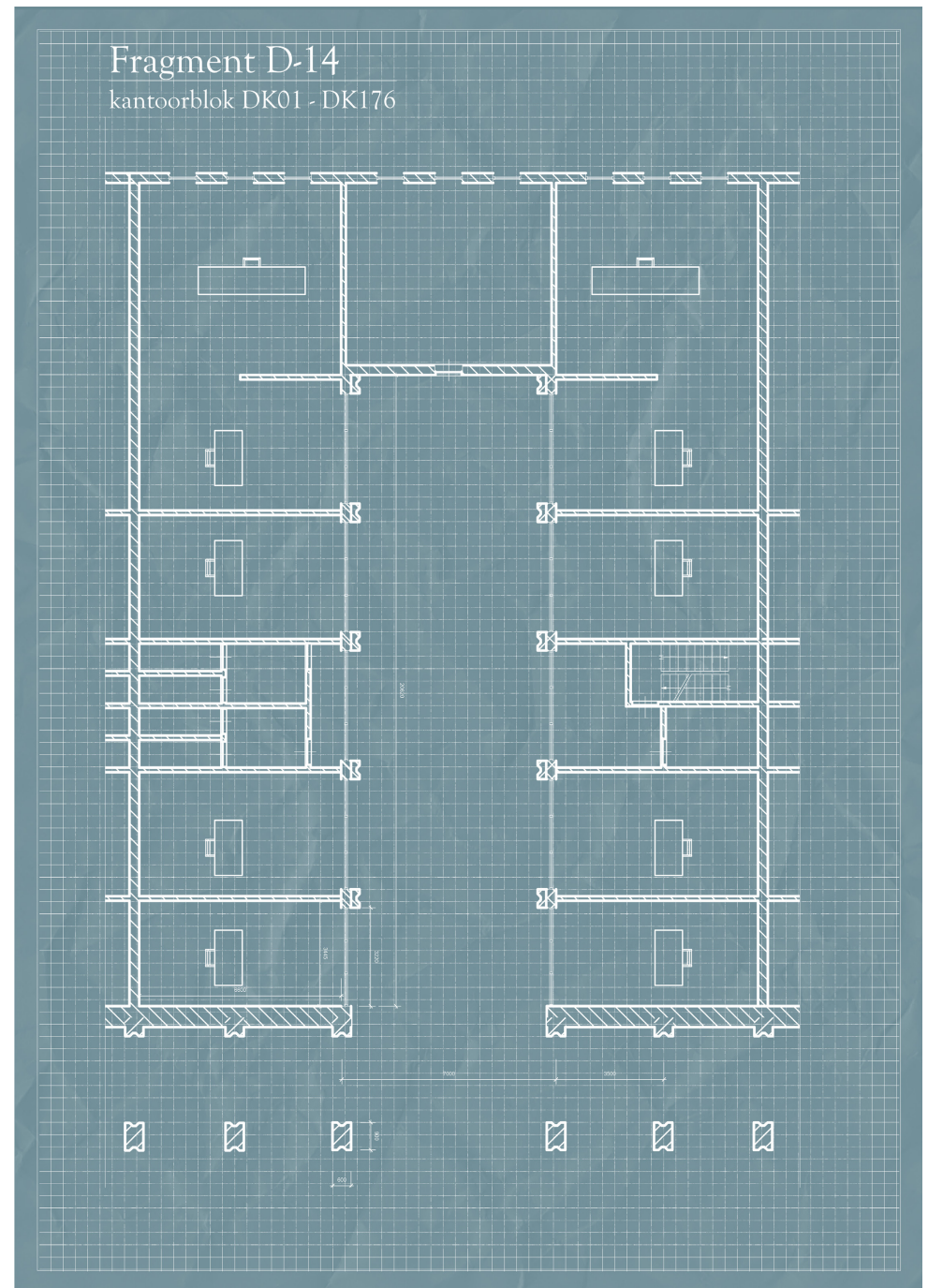


I also made my own composite picture, one that focuses more heavily on the dark and lights in the pictures. It also singels out the background wall with clouds and the door to a 'free' life.





I also made an plan view of the interior of the bank, one that should, at least partly explain the layout of the corridor.



**Making a scene**