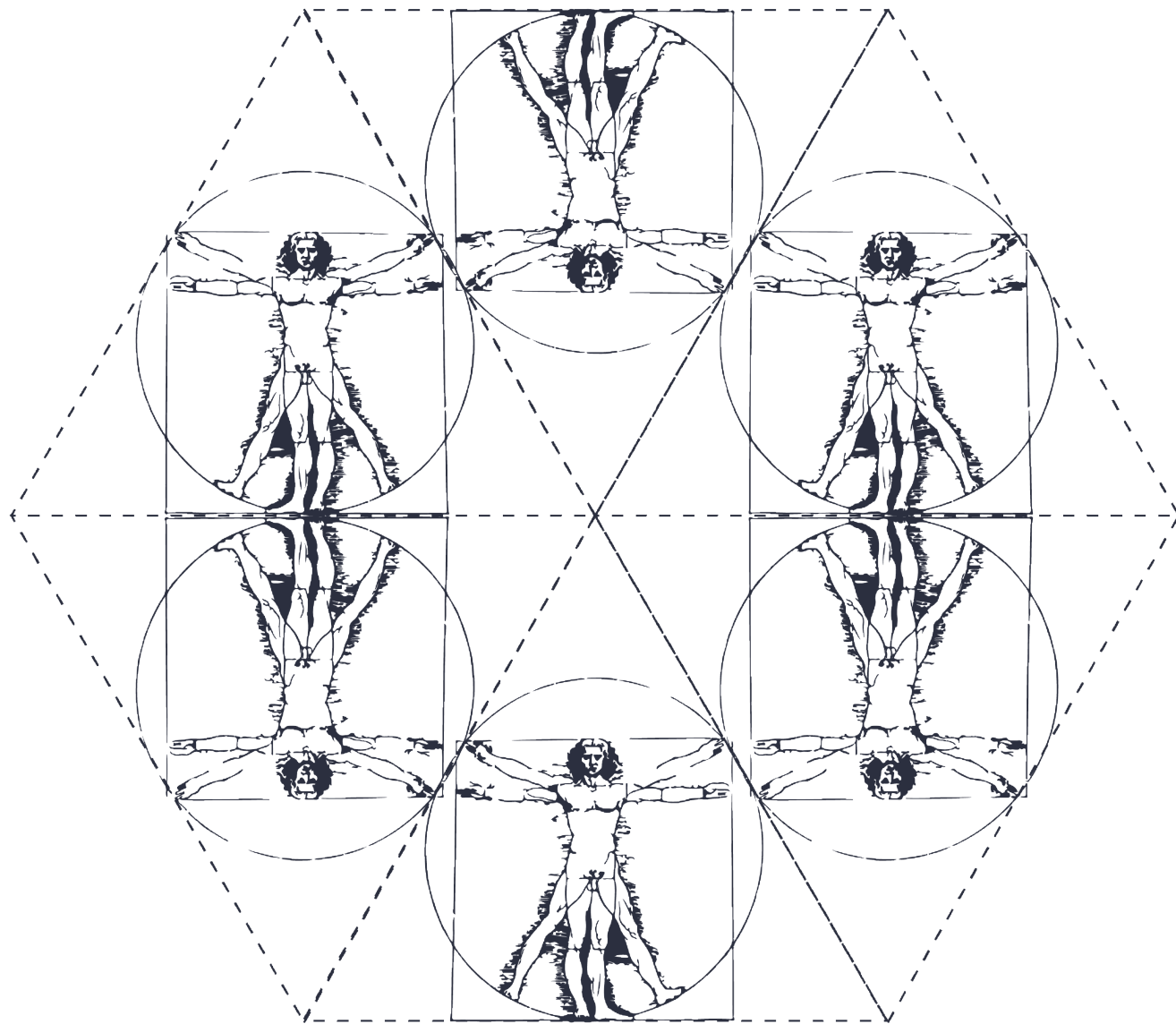


The New *Public Luxury*



Master Thesis
Ronja Dmoch

2023/2024

Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design



"The baths at Caracalla"; Oil on Canvas, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1899



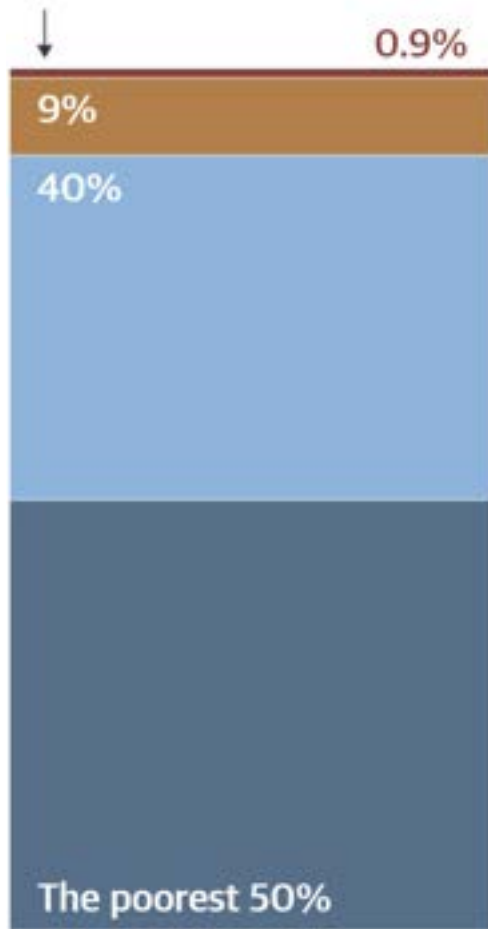
Shopping in Venice, twitter, 2018

Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty, and no man has more care, than he who endeavours to procure the most wealth, which in his opinion, is possessing the most happiness.

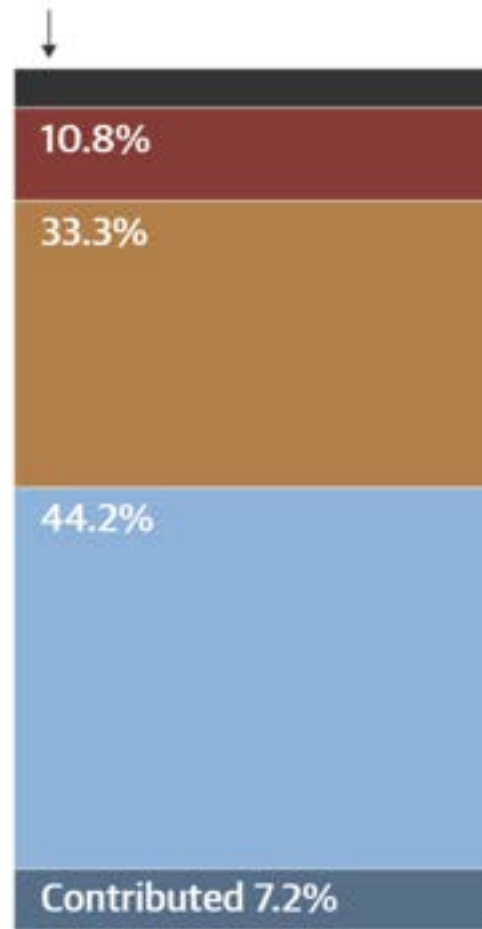
- Socrates

The wealthiest 10% of people are responsible for nearly half the world's CO2 emissions

In 2015 the richest 0.1% of people ...



... contributed 4.5% to global carbon emission



Guardian graphic. Source: Emissions-inequality.org

“Addressing excessive personal consumption is something that isn’t on the agenda for the government and policy-makers. This is bad news for the planet and our prospects of reaching net zero.”

- Aimee Ambrose

Public luxury for all or private luxury for some: this is the choice we face

George Monbiot



Labour at least wants to protect and improve our communal life. But even it ducks the biggest issues

1,042



Screenshot from, *the guardian.com*

*“ The expansion of public wealth
creates more space for everyone;
the expansion of private wealth
reduces it, eventually damaging
most people’s quality of life.”*

– George Monbiot

The Reason

It is undeniable that we are living in times of challenge and change. With not only the climate crisis showing its first palpable impact on weather related disasters, but also social disparities and polarization leading to conflict and aggression, there is an urgency that prompts for critical reflections on societal values.

In 2015, according to a study published in The Guardian, the richest 10% of the population were responsible for over 50% of global CO₂ emissions (Horton, 2022). Wealth today is not equal to prosperity anymore. Instead, the current status is quite the opposite. Luxury items and gadgets that symbolize status and wealth of one person are now inevitably a burden on others. Considering this, one might think that our best chances of saving the environment from any future damage would be to cut the CO₂ emissions of those wealthiest among us. However, as stated by professor of energy policy at Sheffield Hallam University Aimee Ambrose;

“Addressing excessive personal consumption is something that isn’t on the agenda for the government and policymakers. This is bad news for the planet and our prospects of reaching net zero.”

Social inequality in itself has been there for as long as social hierarchies have existed, and in itself it doesn’t have to be something bad. The point when it starts to corrupt and degrade societies and sparks outrage, dissatisfaction and conflict is when the gap between the richest among us and the rest of the population is getting too wide. Right now, there is an “obscene disparity between the people at the top and the people at the bottom, that is now wider than it has ever been in the entire history of the world “; according to Ronald Wright (Radford, 2022).

That’s why my research started with drawing a timeline of different western societies and the buildings they birthed. Joseph Cambell once said:” If you want to understand what’s most important to a society, don’t examine its art or literature, simply look at its biggest buildings, because inequality manifests itself within the built environment”. Let’s have a closer look at the best built example for public luxury: The Roman bathhouse or also called leisure palace. This giant structure held more functions than just bathing. It served as a social hub with all sorts of amenities that the public could enjoy. Libraries, parks, sport facilities and canteens. It was a building rich in scale but also in spatial experience.

While it used to be the case that some of the biggest and most luxurious buildings were public buildings, nowadays the grandest buildings are built and owned privately. Because the definition of property is exclusion, the more of a resource is held privately, the lesser is left to share amongst those who do not have the opportunity to own a building. In fact, this system of ruling wealth is called plutocracy, and it has quietly infiltrated and perhaps even taken over some parts of our democratic Western society. We don't build schools, social housing, or common infrastructure, the things on which democracy depends. Most construction sites are expensive private apartment buildings (Radford, 2022) and this is arguably a hostile environment for democratic imagination and participation. (Bickford, 2000).

The economist George Monbiot proposes a solution for this issue. "While we are now living in a world that promotes private luxury and public sufficiency, we could decrease our carbon footprint and increase people's quality of life in general by turning to private sufficiency and public luxury" (Monbiot, 2017). Private sufficiency is nothing new. The building industry in The Netherlands has been actively working for years to bring houses to net zero. Measures to achieve

this are forced upon all parties involved by the government. Public luxury on the other hand, is something one couldn't point out immediately.

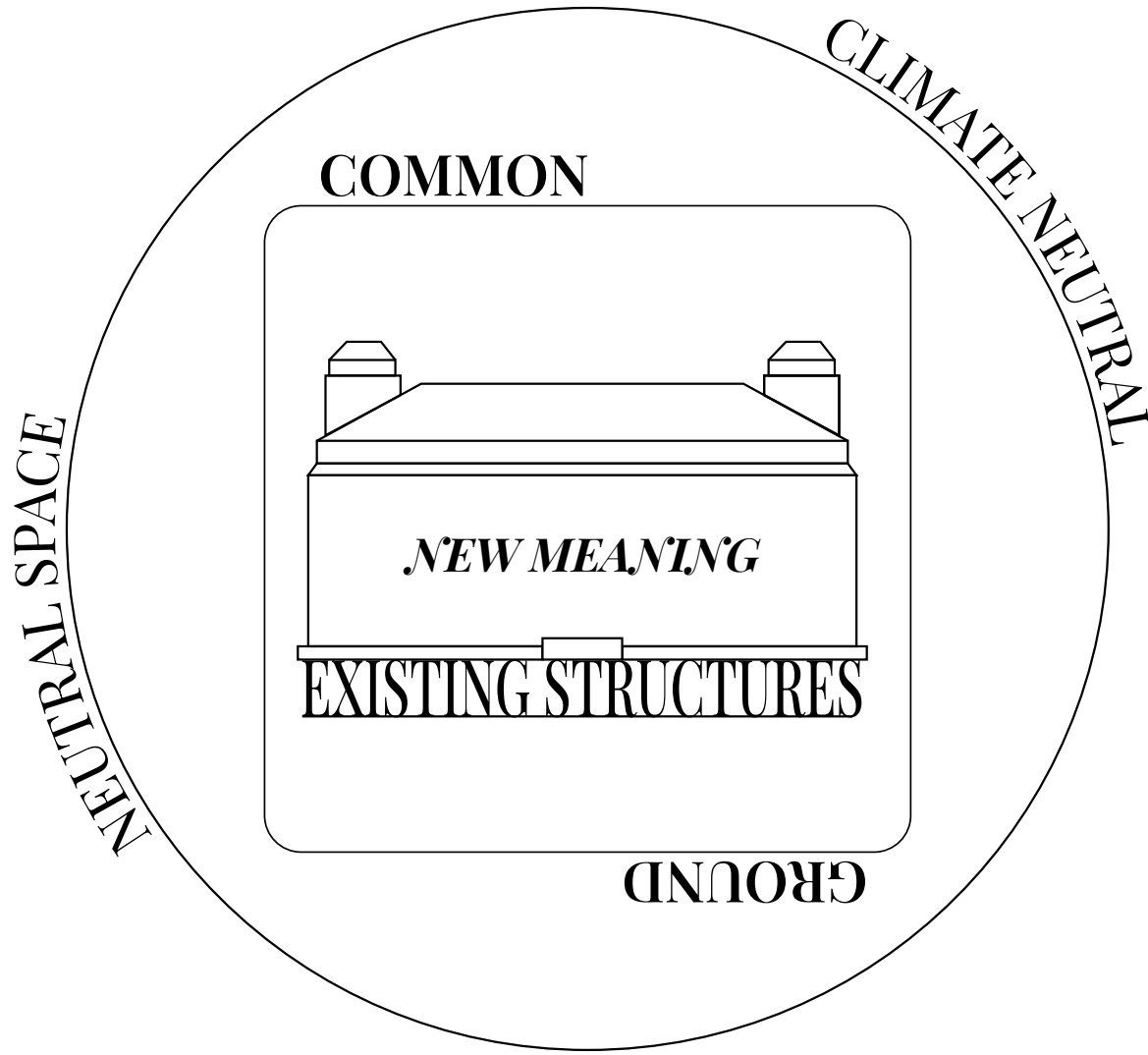
Most public facilities do have a capitalistic aspect of efficiency. Like train stations that actively remove benches for people to rest on (Perrett, 2021), or squares filled with tables and chairs of restaurants only for paying customers to enjoy. Monbiots' proposition serves as the ideological foundation for this transformative architectural endeavor. But what would public luxury look and feel like? Do we just make existing luxury accessible for everyone? Simply build more public facilities? Or is it about changing the way we define luxury inherently? And important for this study is the question: Can architecture support a shift in societal values? Since today's definition of luxury is closely linked to exclusivity, making luxury inclusive already leads to a more fundamental and ideological approach. We must re-evaluate what we already have and stop consuming and building.











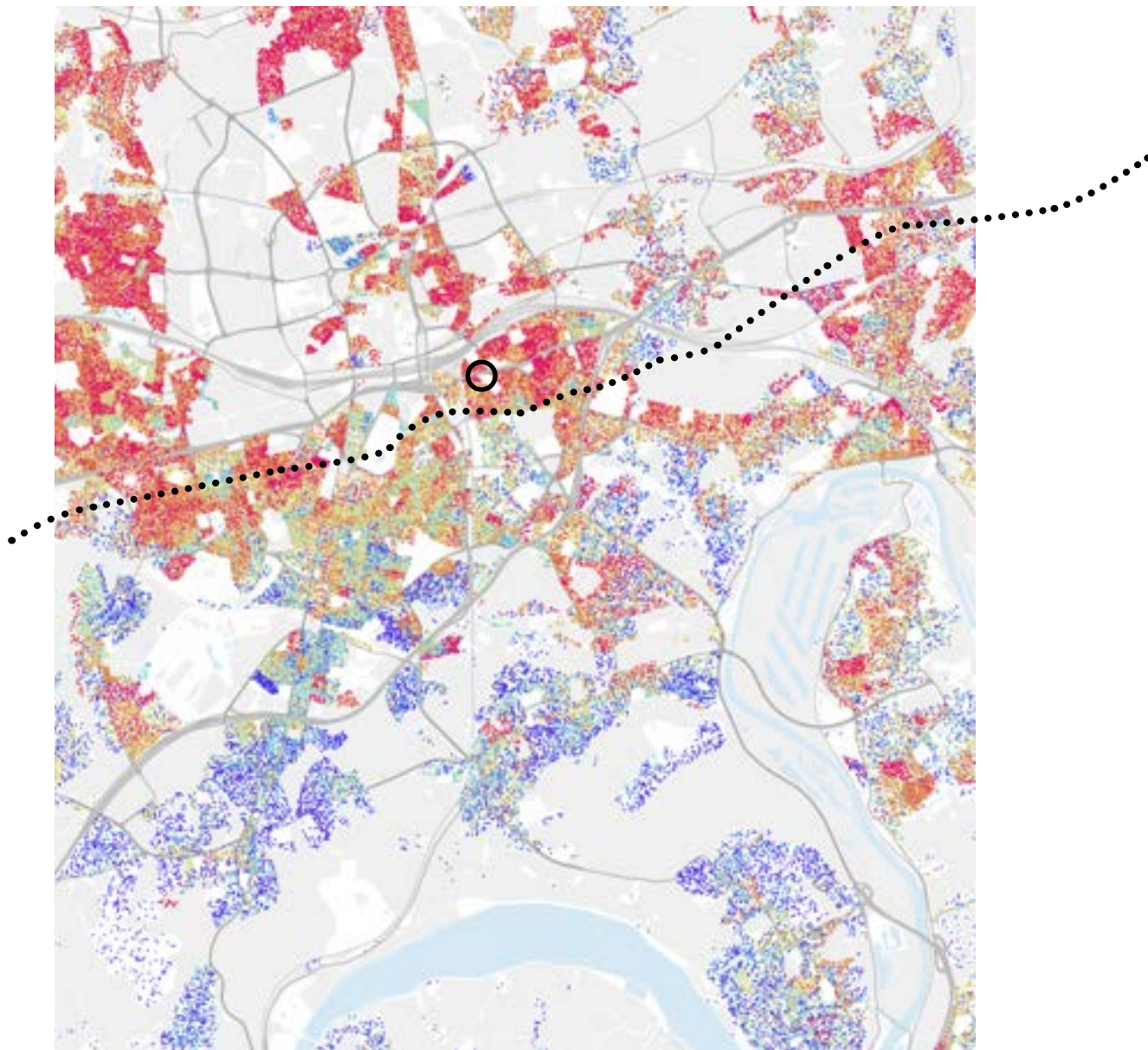
The Assignment

To make a shift in social values we have to redefine what “Luxury” actually is in the 21st century. Or rather, what it has to be. We have to reevaluate what we already possess and stop consuming and building more. “Public Luxury” can be shared and enjoyed by everyone, without the individual having to sacrifice, but how do we make it accessible for everyone? How will it influence people’s behavior?

For the individual it is quite hard to make drastic changes to one’s lifestyle. Your standard of living oftentimes determines your norms and values, your social life and worldview. It’s difficult to break through learned and set structures and to make the right decision for the greater good on your own. But what if there is a neutral space created that facilitates all amenities one could wish for. Then choosing one’s own private indulgence makes it an active decision against the

common good. Why would you still choose to satisfy your personal needs in a way that is hurtful to the environment and your fellow humans, when you can get the same luxury met in a socially and ecologically friendly way, even actively contributing to a carbon neutral future?

The assignment is to design such a space on the basis of common ground, meaning physically owned and governed by the city (and with it creating common ground socially). We have enough existing structures to choose from that currently only support private luxury. Through an architectural intervention and transformation, the New public Luxury will stimulate a shift in social values and stand as a symbol of new societal values.



2. Wealth distribution in Essen

•••• A40 Autobahn
— Project Location

The Location

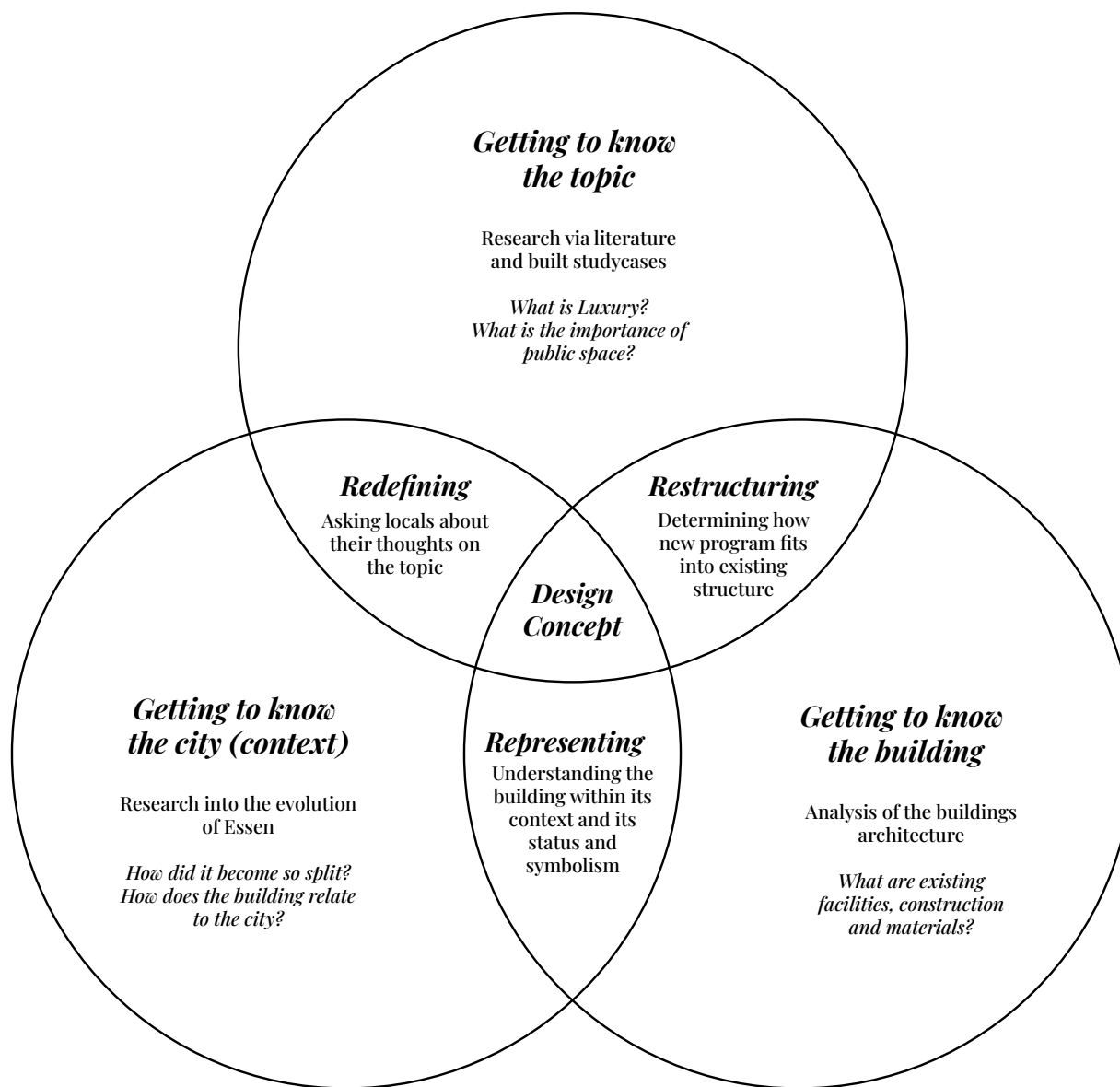
Germany is the land i was born in. It is also sadly the european land, that regularly charts within the global top 10 of carbon emitters.

I tested this re-evaluate approach for the topic of public luxury on a location in Essen. Essen is one of Germany's biggest cities and part of the Ruhrgebiet which is home to more than 150 (inactive) coal mines, putting Germany on the top 10 global CO₂ emitter list. One of the biggest and most representative buildings of Essen is the "Handelshof". This prestigious building has a long history and was mostly used as a luxury hotel. Moreover, this building lies exactly on Essen's ever-growing socioeconomic divide between the rich south and the poor north. This existing structure, that as for now only supports private luxury, will be transformed into the New Public Luxury, and will represent new societal values of the city Essen, while also using its potential to support social cohesion.

When it was opened in 1912 it was the city's beacon of wealth and prosperity. "Essen the Shopping city", soon became a metropolis due to its world-famous steel factories and

therefore welcomed high-ranking guests that were shown the great industrial power of the region. In recent times, it has lost part of this representative function, as the area around the hotel and the station became increasingly neglected and run down. Especially the square around the station is struggling with drug related problems and homelessness. For a guest the hotel really feels like a sanctuary to flee from the harsh reality of the city.

This beautiful building that once held meaning and purpose for the city and its residents, now only serves for making profit. Therefore, I would like to pose the question: "What if?". What could this building look like if we were to explore its urban and architectural potential, without the aspect of growth and capital in mind? What if we free ourselves from the aim to gain something from it, other than serving humanity as a vessel for personal development?



Methodology

To reach a design concept that caters to the specific location and building I will conduct research on three different levels.

The Topic

The Context

The Building

I will start with researching these three topics as neutrally as possible to form an objective and professional base to work with. The results of this research can then be interpreted with consideration and in relation to each other. For example, to reach a new programming for the public luxury, having a broad and professional understanding of the topic is essential. However, without testing it within the project's cultural and social context, it would be neglectful to impose a hypothesis for a locally needed and working program.

Through combining these aspects;

I will *Re-define* what public luxury is through objective academic research, and subjective local input.

I will *Re-structure* the building through analysis of the existing spatial programming and adding the redefined program.

The building will *Re-present* the new values of the city.





Ancient History

Classical Antiquity

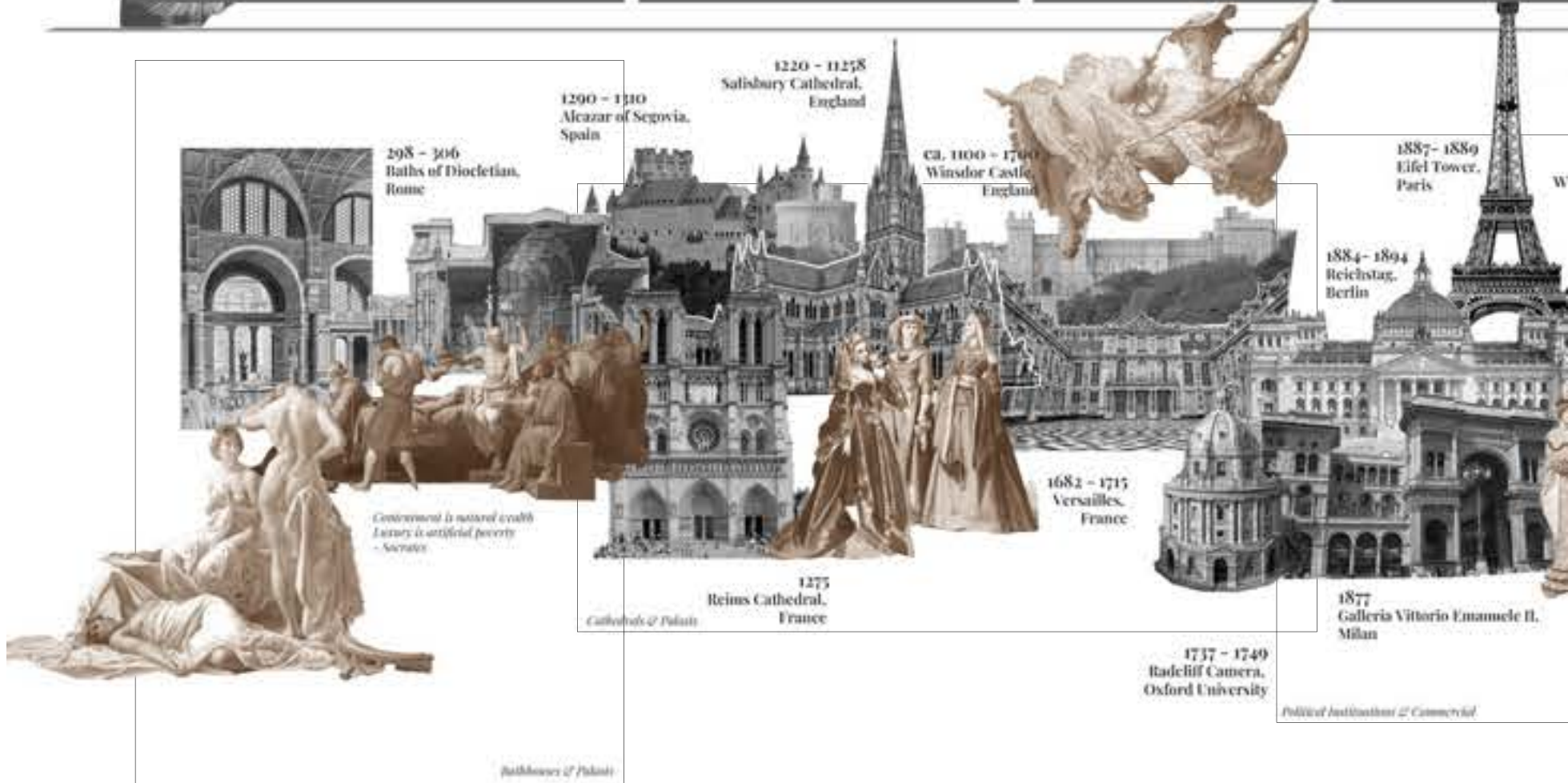
Post-Classical History

Middle Ages

Early Modern History

Renaissance

1789 - 1799
French Revolution



How did we get here?

To research the meaning of “luxury” is to research society and its core values. If we want to understand what luxury means to us as a Western society in the 21st Century, we must first have a look at what it meant for previous generations. And if we not only want to understand how it affects our society now, but take active part in what it might mean in the future, it is even more important to truly understand what it means.

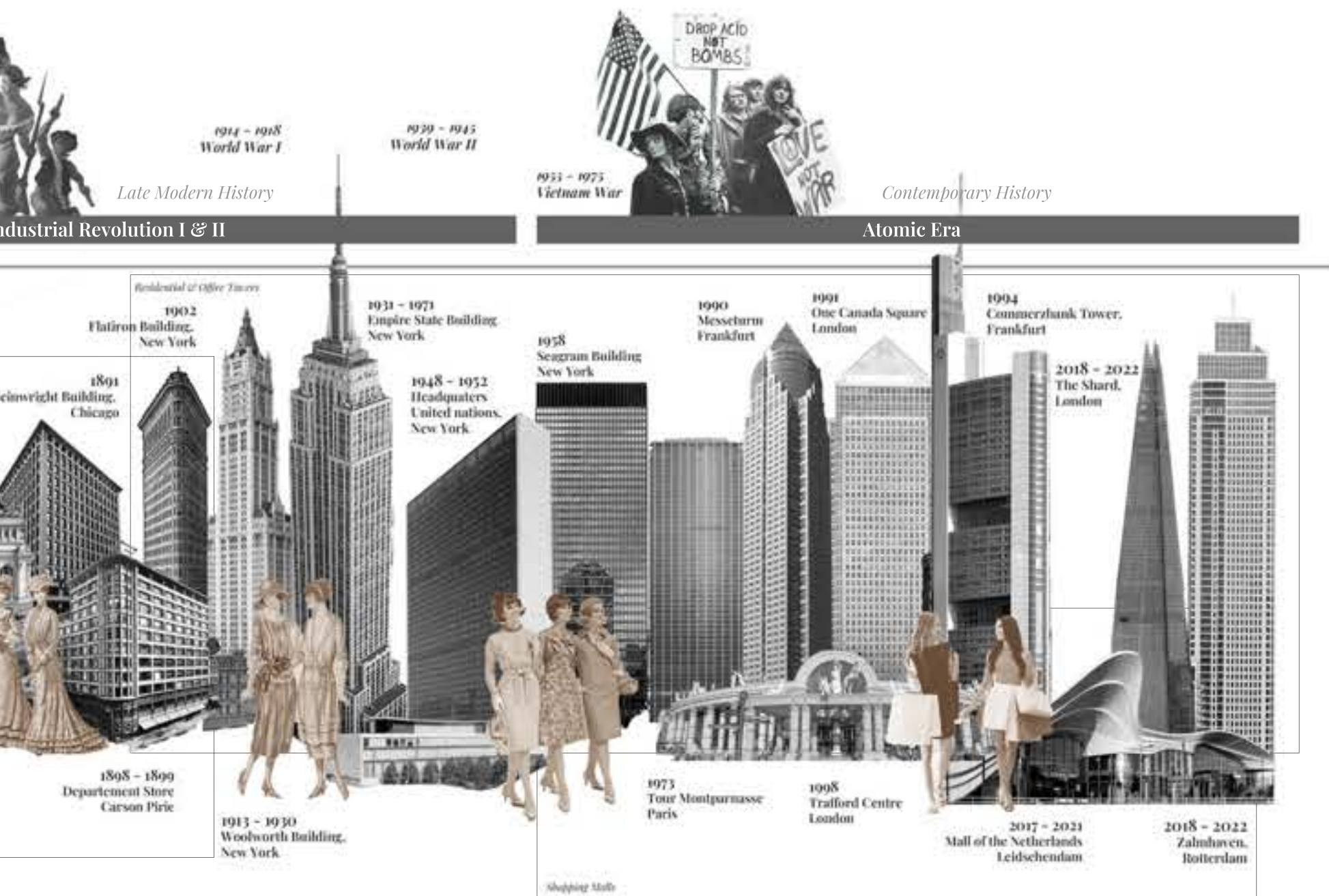
The word “luxury” as used today, most commonly refers to an abundance of wealth and comfort. It is often associated with materialistic aspects of one’s belongings or the ability to purchase them,

giving an indication of the owner’s status, with the need for social stratification as the main driver of the individual. This, however, was not always the case. Over the centuries and within different cultures the term has had varying meanings, ones more related to having and possessing, and ones more related to being or experiencing.

Originally the word stems from the Latin word “luxuria”, meaning “extravagance or excess” and was used by ancient Romans to describe rebellious living and sinful excess. As Socrates put it “Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty”. Luxury buildings then were seen as

morally distasteful, like the conspicuous villas outside of Naples, Italy. Little did they realize that the epitomes of public luxury were built during their time. The best built example for public luxury I can imagine is the typology of the Roman bathhouse. The monumental constructions that served as “palasts for the people” and showcased the societal value of its time and culture. The rich architecture facilitated not only large and warm baths, but also sport facilities, libraries, spaces for lectures and food courts.

The word “Luxury” was then adopted into Norman French and more commonly used in the sense of “Lust”. This sensual



connotation was kept when the word then evolved into English in the 14th century. The reference to 'wealth, opulence and indulgence' with which we now associate the word 'luxury' does not appear in English texts until the early seventeenth century, the time around which King Louis XIV built Versailles.

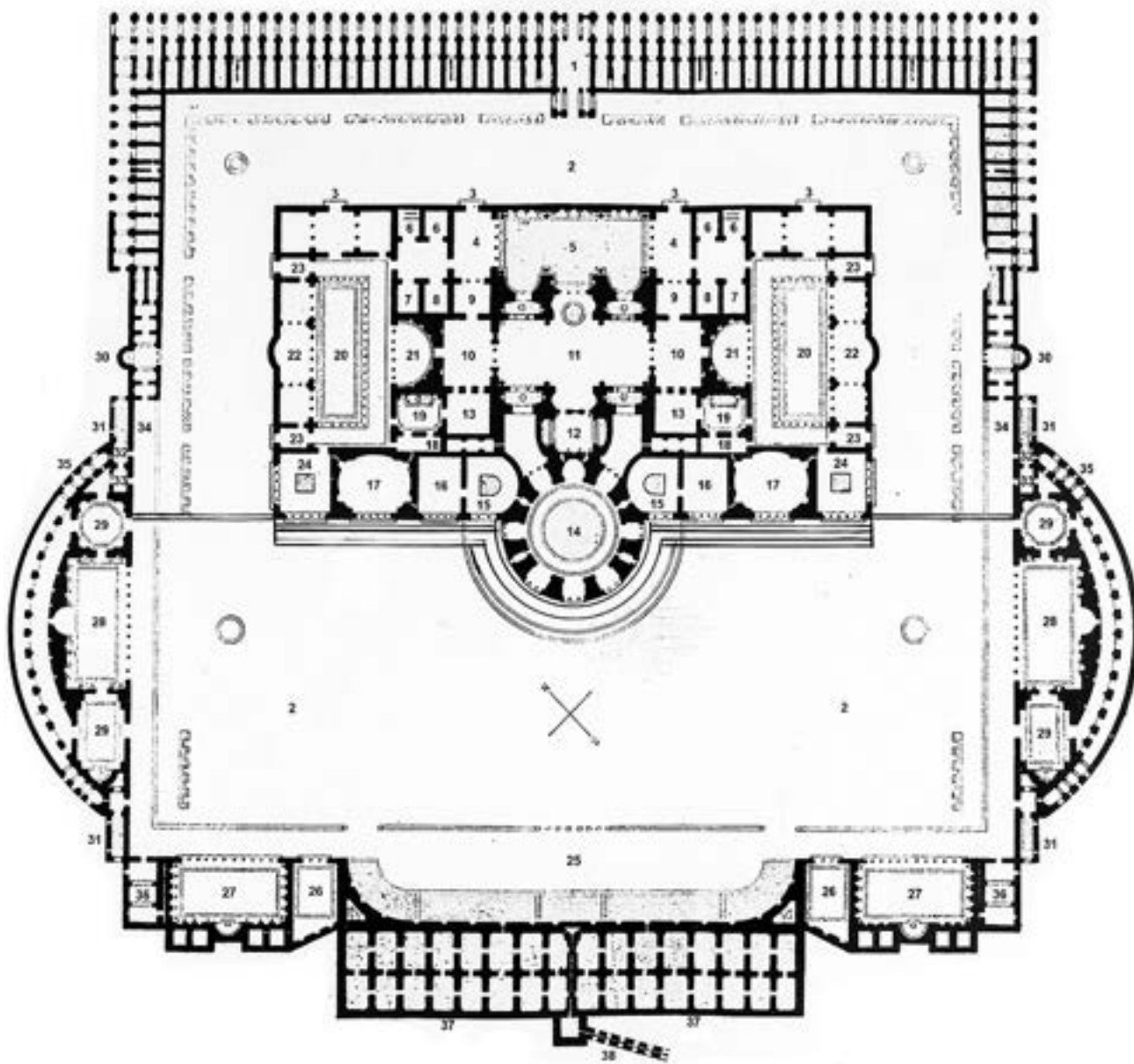
The eighteenth century is known for rising urbanization and industrialization, and a belief in freedom and equal rights. Thus, liberalism provided an economic rationale for luxury as a means of creating wealth for all. While luxury used to be for a small elite in its own isolated world, democratization gradually made luxu-

ry accessible to a wider audience by the end of the eighteenth century. Following this was the time also called the consumer revolution during which the typology of the shopping mall, or gallery, evolved and took its place within the urban fabric. The Gallerie Vittorio Emanuele in Milan, Italy is one good example.

With technological advancement and mass production, a market for luxury goods and brands was created that fueled the consumerist behavior of people. Social stratification was never as easy as getting the newest clothes, accessories, a nicely decorated interior, or even a nicely decorated house. The middle class was

thriving, and no one questioned the progress.

Since the last big revolution, wealth has accumulated to a small elite over the backs of many people. The gap between social classes is widening, and we know that if we continue at this rate, it will inevitably cost all human and non-human life.



Floorplan, Baths of Caracalla

Palast for the people

When I thought of built examples of public luxury I first thought of the public library). But upon further examination, I realized it only facilitates one aspect, and that is the provision of knowledge. It is an important function and should definitely be seen as a luxury most people don't have access to, but it misses the social aspect of shared rituals and values.

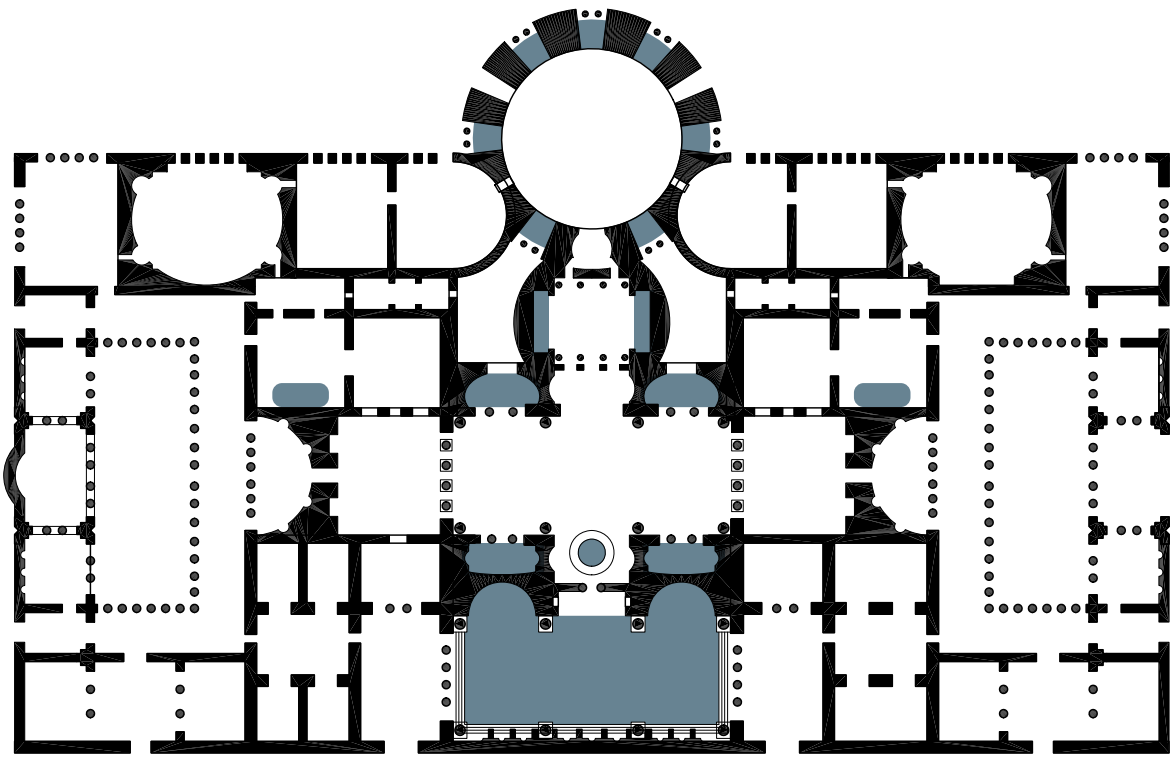
No, the best built study-case for public luxury I can imagine is the typology of the Roman bathhouse. The monumental constructions that served as "palasts for the people" and showcased the societal value of its time and culture. The rich architecture facilitated not only large and warm baths, but also sport facilities, libraries, spaces for lectures and food courts.

Within these walls you would meet all social ranks equally, from the homeless to the emperor himself. It was a place where, in a ritualistic manner, people would come together and indulge in pampering oneself and discussing and learning from and with one another.

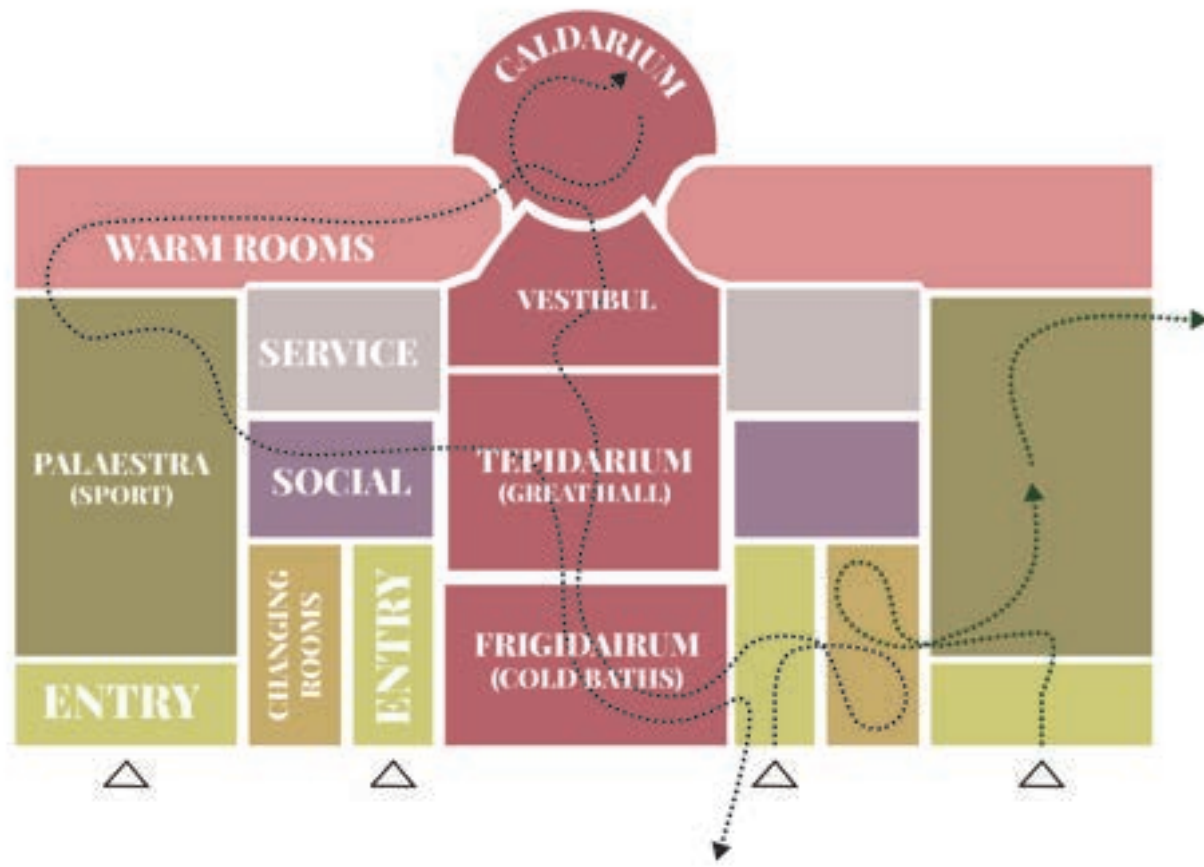
To get a better understanding of how these programs worked together and related to each other I analyzed the architecture and evaluated what can be useful to take into the design phase.



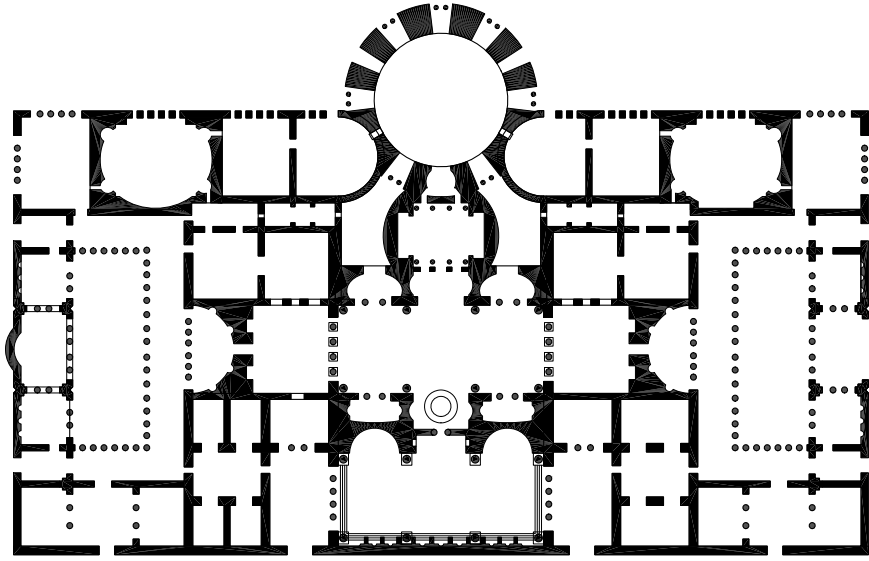




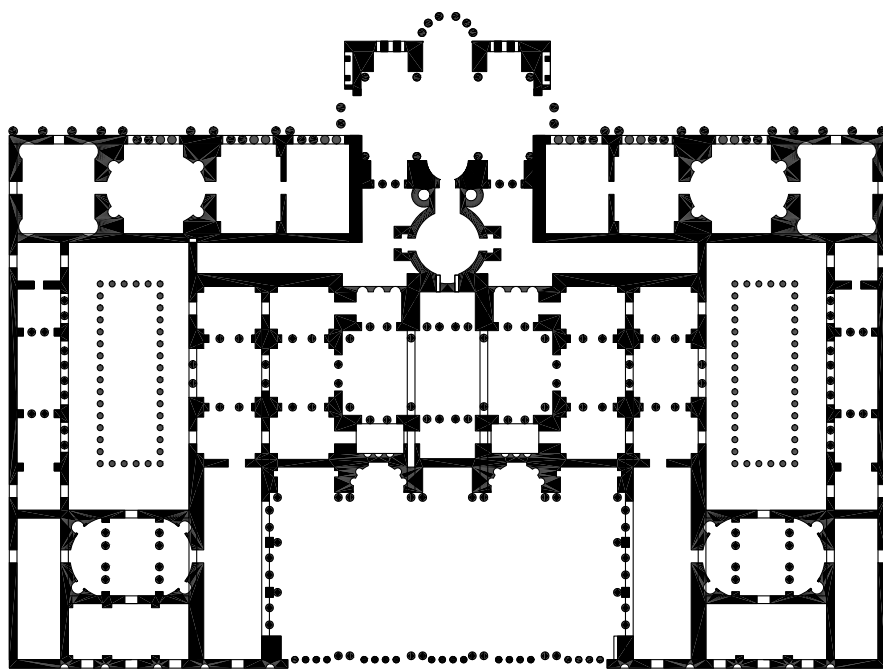
Floorplan - Pools in proportion to building



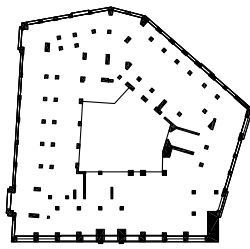
Floorplan - Programming and Routing



Baths of Caracalla

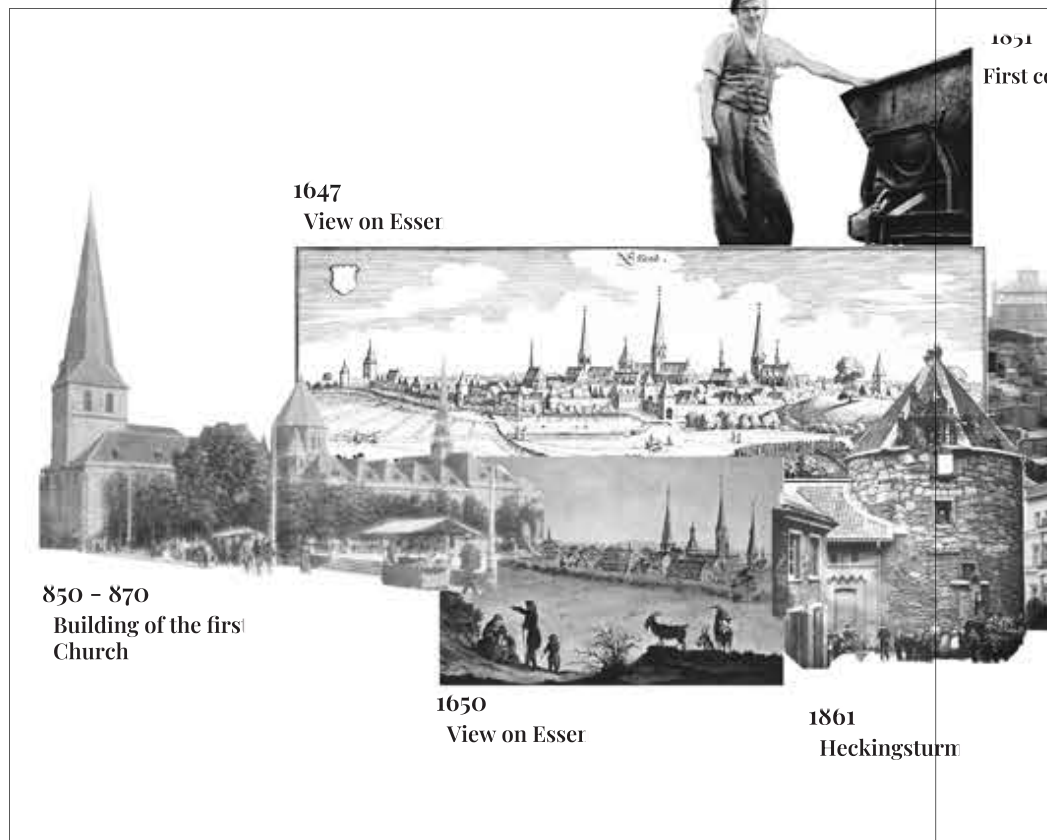


Baths of Diocletian



Handelshof

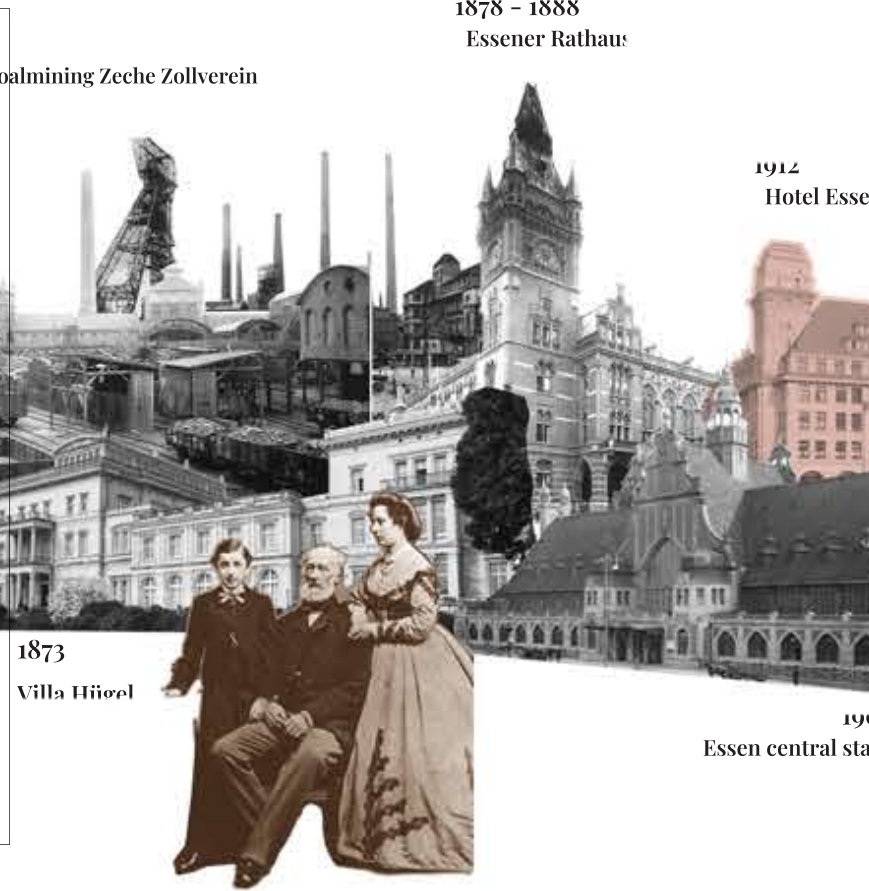
850
Founding of a woman abbey



850 - 870
Building of the first Church

industrialization

1878 - 1888
Essener Rathaus



Evolution of Essen

Essen, a city located in the western part of Germany, has a rich history that is intertwined with the rise of industry and commerce in Europe. Its origins trace back to around 890 AD when it began as a women's abbey. Remarkably, the church from that era still stands today, a testament to Essen's enduring legacy.

For centuries, Essen remained a small village, characterized by churches and houses. However, its trajectory changed dramatically with the emergence of the Krupp family. Alfred Krupp, a pioneering industrialist, established a steel casting factory in 1811. This marked the beginning of Essen's transformation into a power-

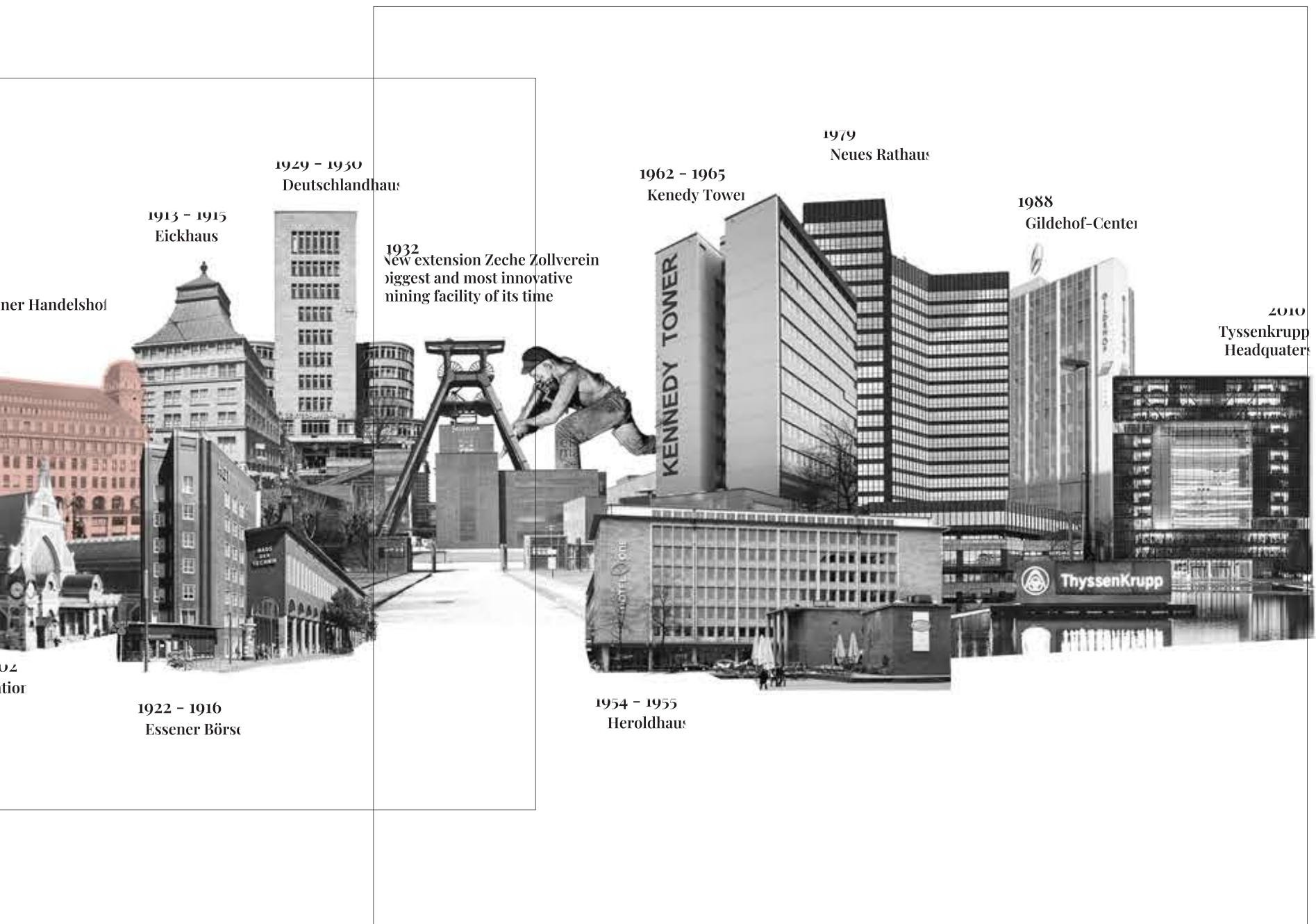
house of industry. The Krupp enterprise flourished and soon became the largest in Europe, shaping the city's landscape for decades to come.

Between 1880 and 1930, Essen experienced rapid urbanization and industrial expansion. The cityscape underwent a significant transformation, with numerous buildings erected to accommodate the burgeoning population and the needs of the growing industrial sector. One notable addition during this period was the Zeche Zollverein, established in 1932, which became the largest and most innovative mining facility of its time.

In 1912, amidst this period of growth, the

opulent Handelshof was constructed, serving as a luxury hotel, and further enhancing Essen's reputation as a center of commerce and culture.

However, like many German cities, Essen endured substantial damage during World War II. In the post-war era, an extensive reconstruction effort was undertaken, focusing not only on restoring housing but also on rebuilding larger structures such as the new municipality building and the headquarters of the Krupp company, which continued to thrive and expand, eventually becoming a globally active corporation.

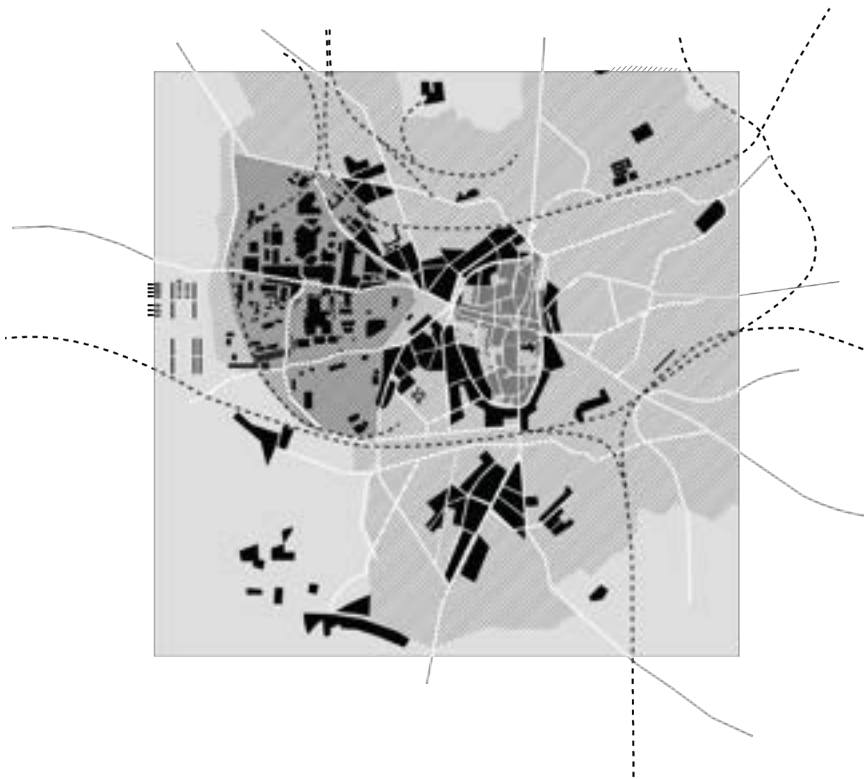


Today, Essen stands as a vibrant metropolis, blending its industrial heritage with modern innovation. The cityscape is a testament to its resilience, with historic landmarks coexisting alongside contemporary developments. From its humble beginnings as a village to its emergence as a major industrial hub, Essen's journey reflects the dynamism and adaptability of urban centers in the face of historical challenges and opportunities.



1810

Essen is a strategically important city with a strong tradition in arms manufacturing. In 1811 Alfred Krupp founds the first cast steel factory
Population at this time; around 3.000 citizens.



1890

Factory taking on an area of more than 30 ha. bigger than the old town. Railroads are being built. Essen reached a population of 100.00 in 1896, as labor made the city attractive for people.

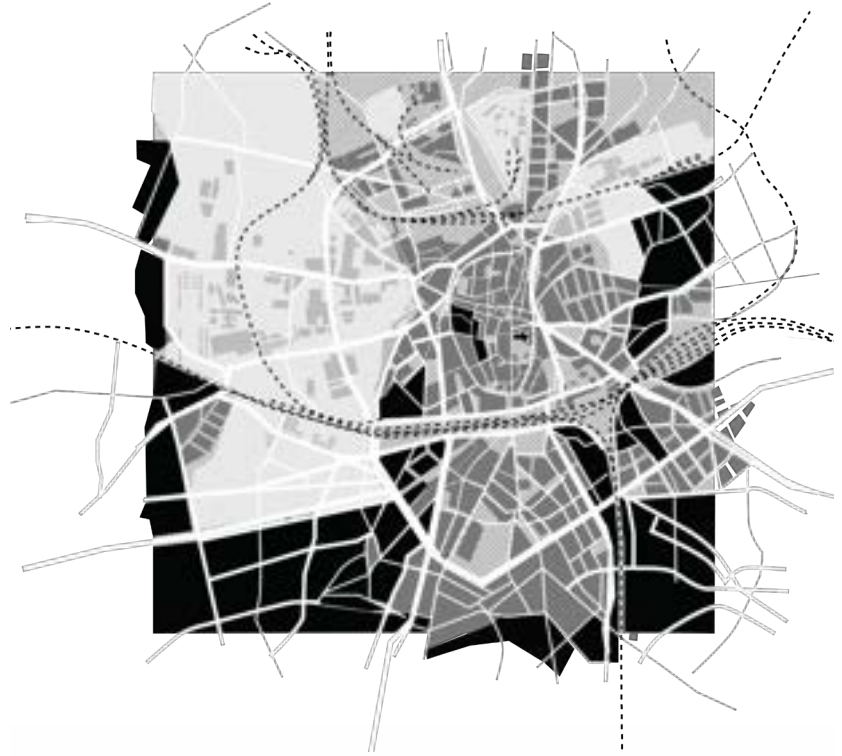


1920

Expansion of the factory and the city. Handelshof was built at an important point. Railroad expansion and two stations. Essen evolved into a big city, with around 400.000 citizens.

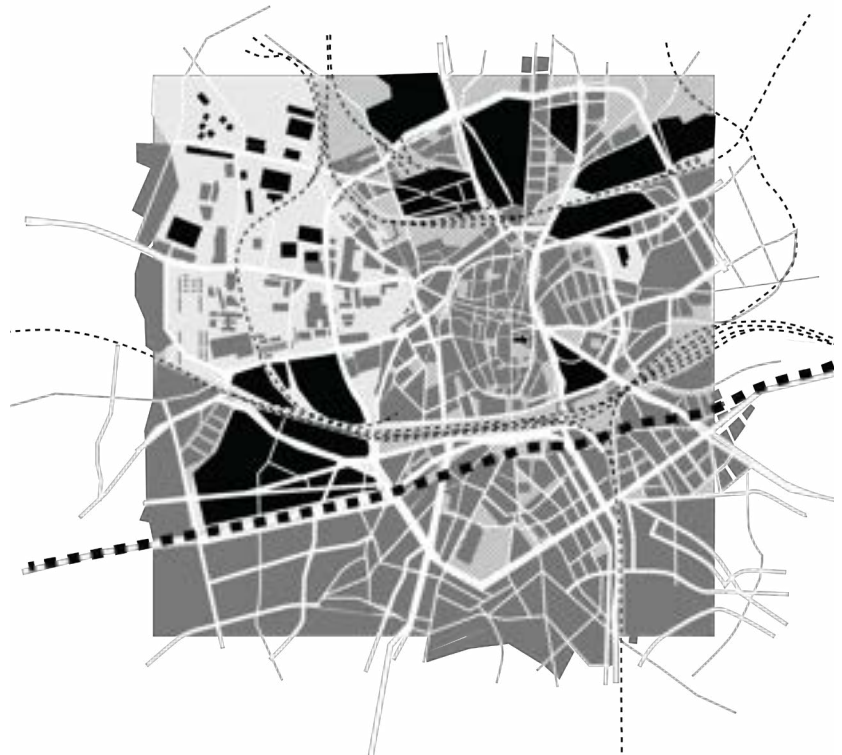
1945

Essen became so important during the war that a sign facing the main railway station welcomed visitors Hitler and Mussolini to the “Armory of the Reich” in 1937. Because of its strategically important role, it took a lot of damage during the war. Especially the factory.



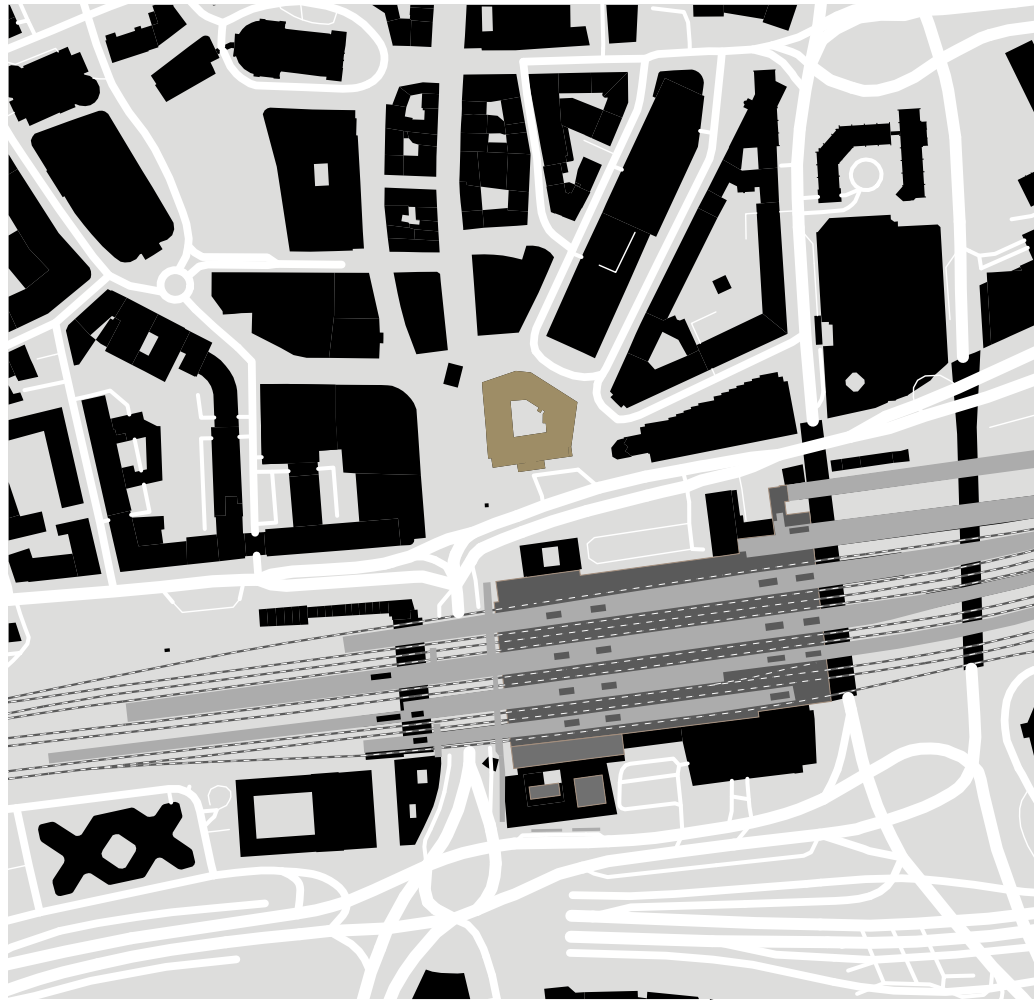
1970

During the time between 1950 and 1961 100.000 new appartements had to be built. These houses were to be built fast and cheap, for people with very little means. 1970, the Ruhrschnellwegtunnel is built. Population peaks at 700.000.

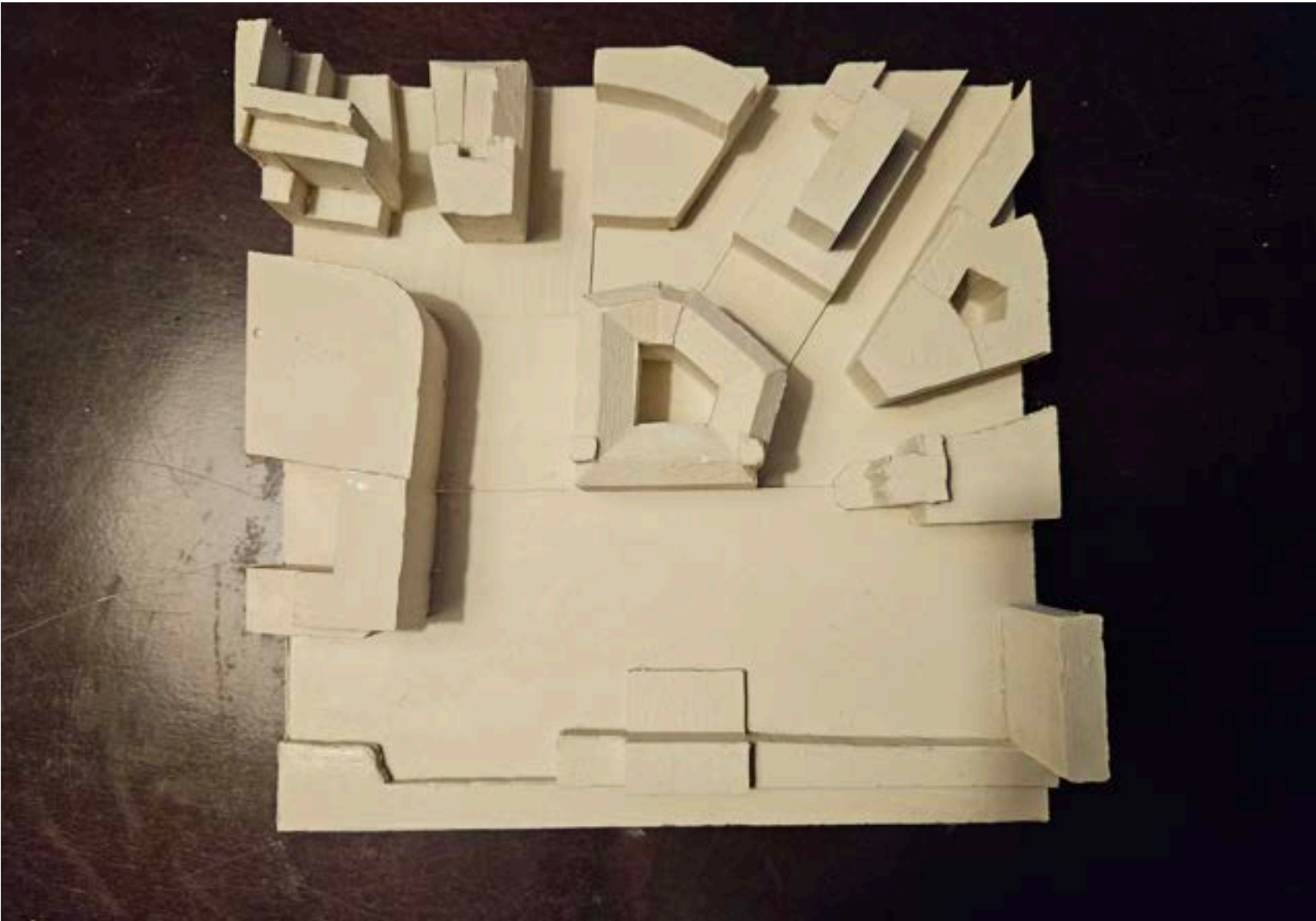
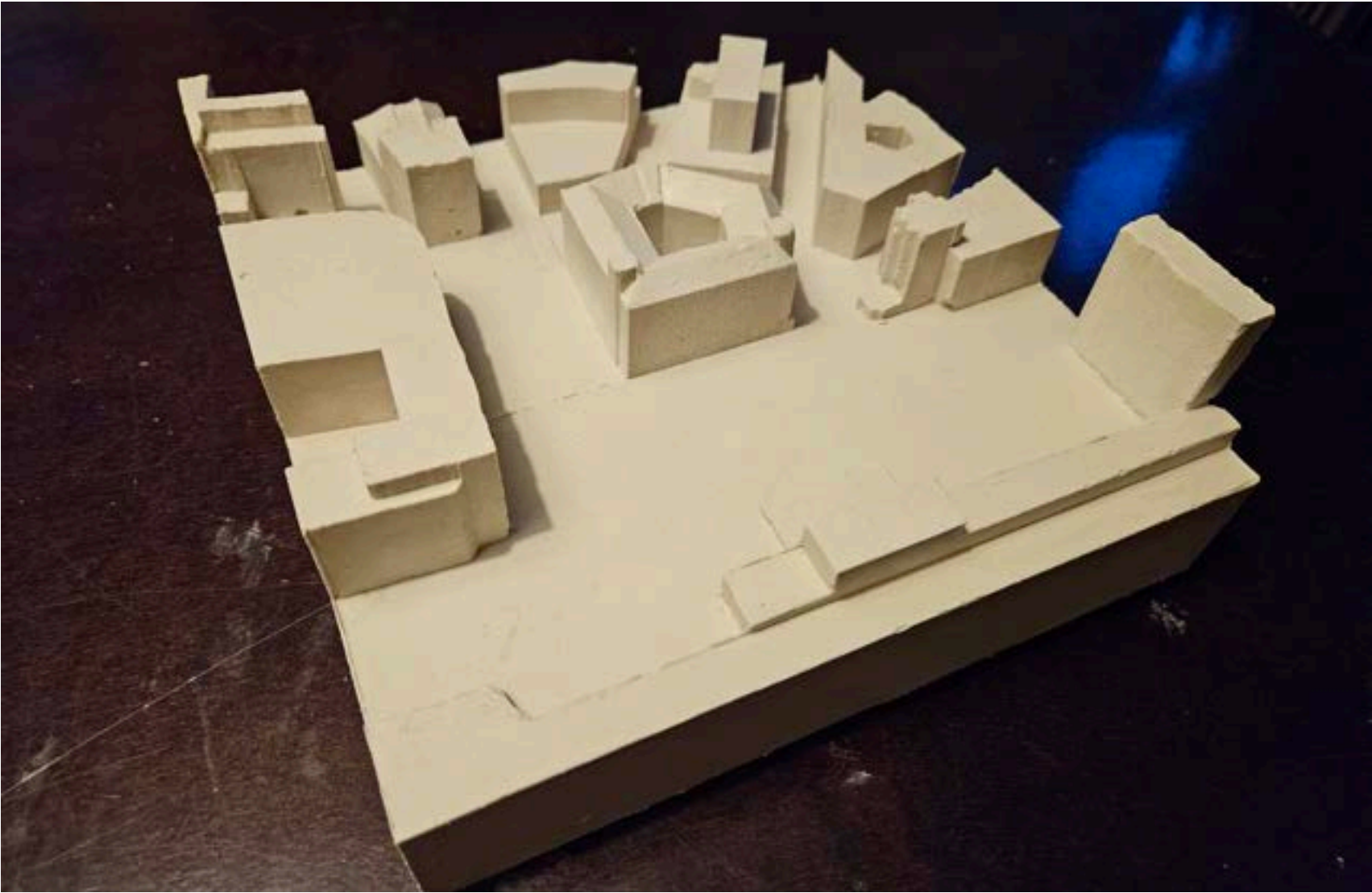




Situation Essen



Situation Handelshof







Mövenpick Hotel - Hotel Handelshof, Essen, 2005



Hotel Handelshof, Essen, rond 1915

Hotel Handelshof

It is the first building you see when you enter the city of Essen when arriving via train or most other public transport. It immediately communicates the city's identity with you through the enormous signage on its roof:

Essen

Die Einkaufsstadt

Which translates to “Essen - the shopping city”. Right there. The building that communicates the cities values: Consumerism.

Lately there has been a change in the signage through the city, into “Essen - die Volkswankstad” which refers to a well-known museum and school in Essen. This change has sparked a discussion amongst locals, who could not quite identify with this statement.

This leaves the question:

What identity and value will Essen communicate in the future?

Of course, the architecture of the Handelshof in itself is a status symbol of the wealth of the city and its history, and this building certainly knows quite some history. The Hotel was built in 1912 and had its grand opening in 1913. At this time, it accommodated around 350 rooms as well as two restaurants, a cafe, a bakery, a cinema, multiple shops, and offices.

During a visit of Benito Mussolini accompanied by Hitler himself, a banner was hung over the facade reading: “Welcome to the weapon factory of the nation”.

1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980





City of Essen
buys the Hotel



birdseye picture. 1930



birdseye picture. 2020



View from the station square towards the building



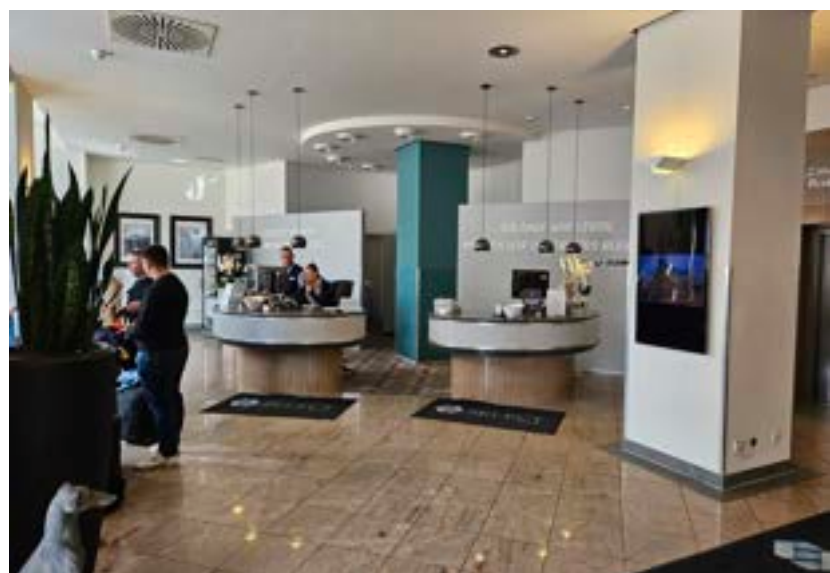
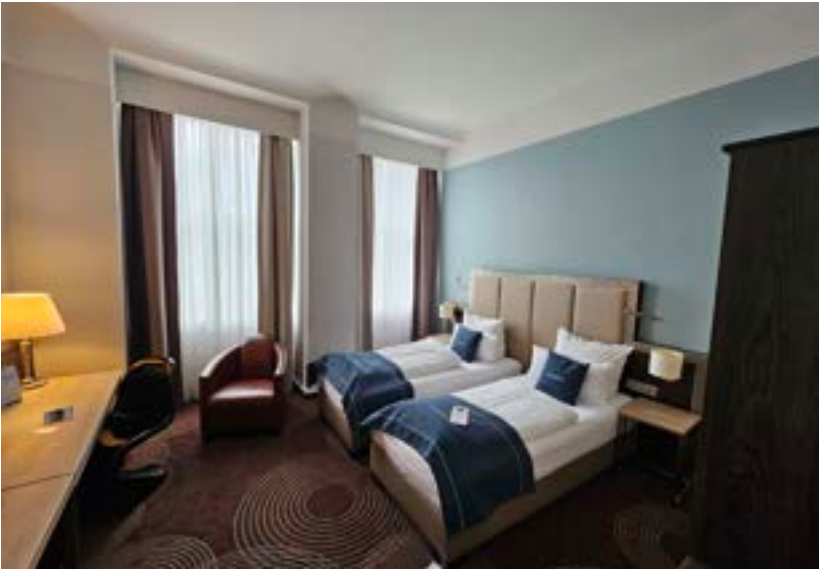
View from the building towards the station square



functional "interior" facade



Representative "exterior" facade







Archive Material

This 100-year-old, prestigious icon of the city of Essen currently belongs to a private party. To get insight into building plans in Germany, one must get permission from the owner of the building, even if these plans are lying in the city's archives. Sadly, in this case the building plans were kept behind closed doors and some improvisation had to be done. An architect can get to know a building through all kinds of manners after all. The sketches on the left are everything I

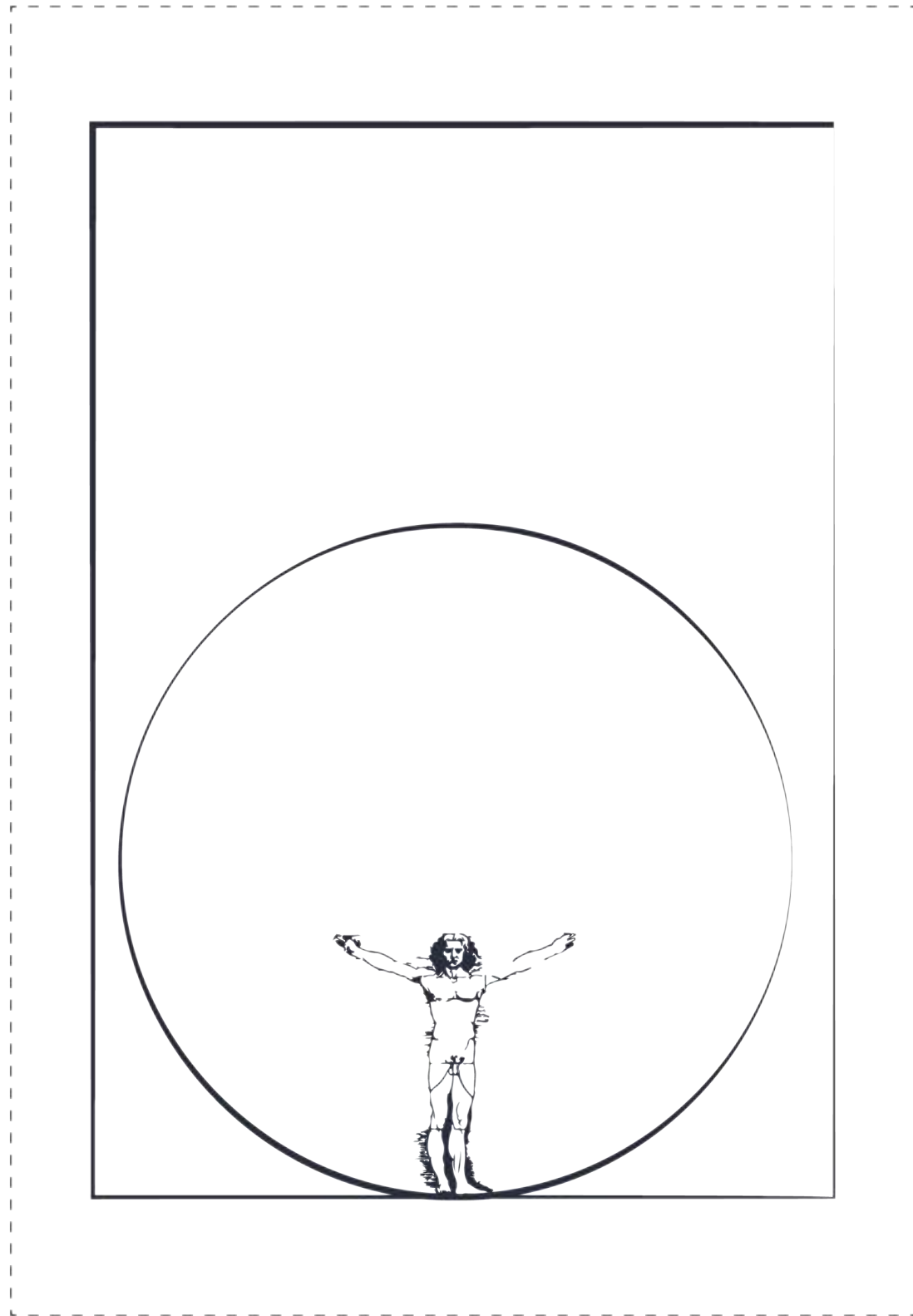
got to know, or assume, about the building's current state. It formed the base for all future plans and designs. Getting to know the structure was not made any easier by the fact that the surrounding area slopes downward for around 2.5 meters. This determined that all floor levels beneath the "first" floor (seen from the main entrance) were shifting. An interesting puzzle to figure out.







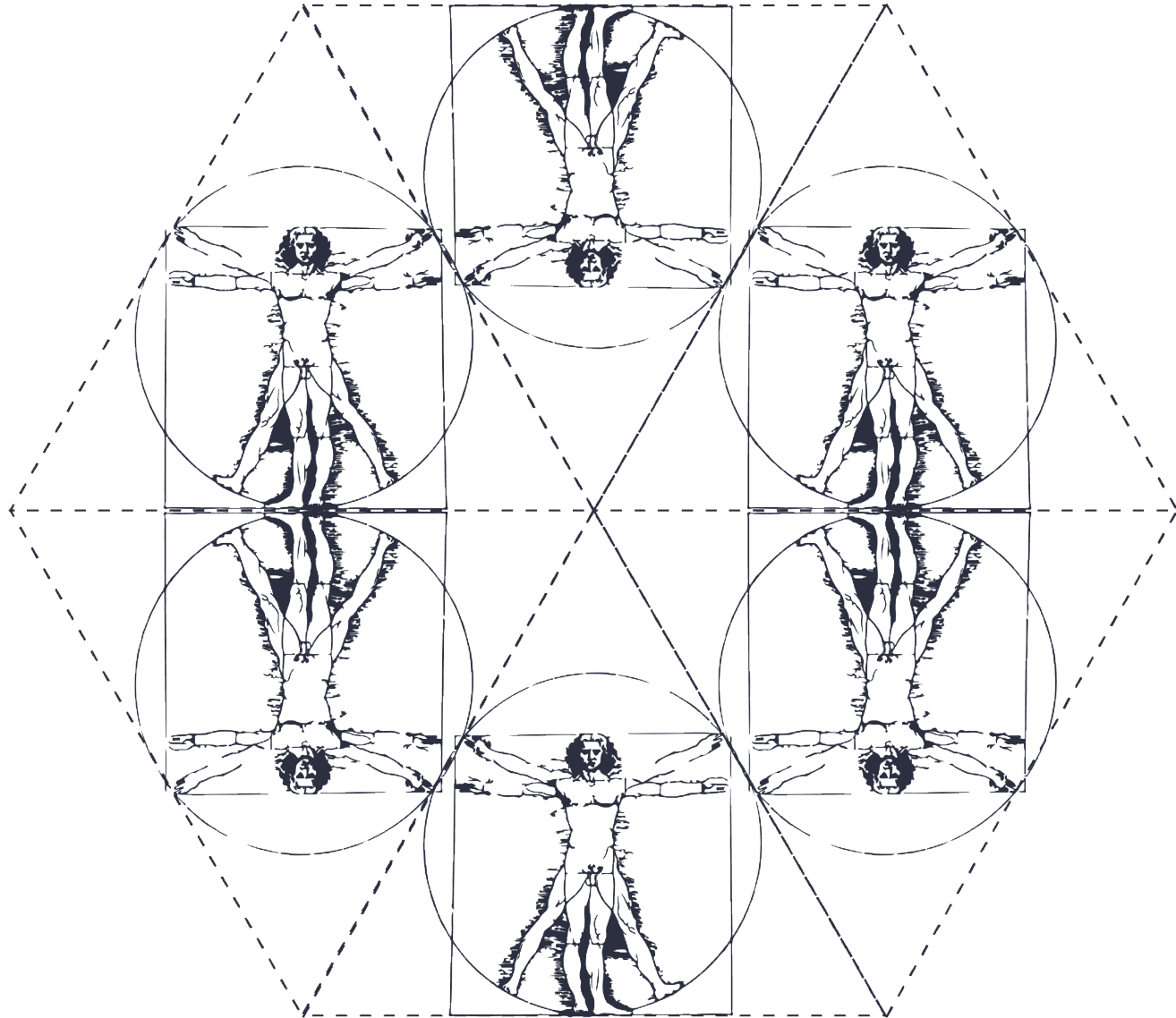




Exclusive

Having

Desire



Inclusive

Being

Need



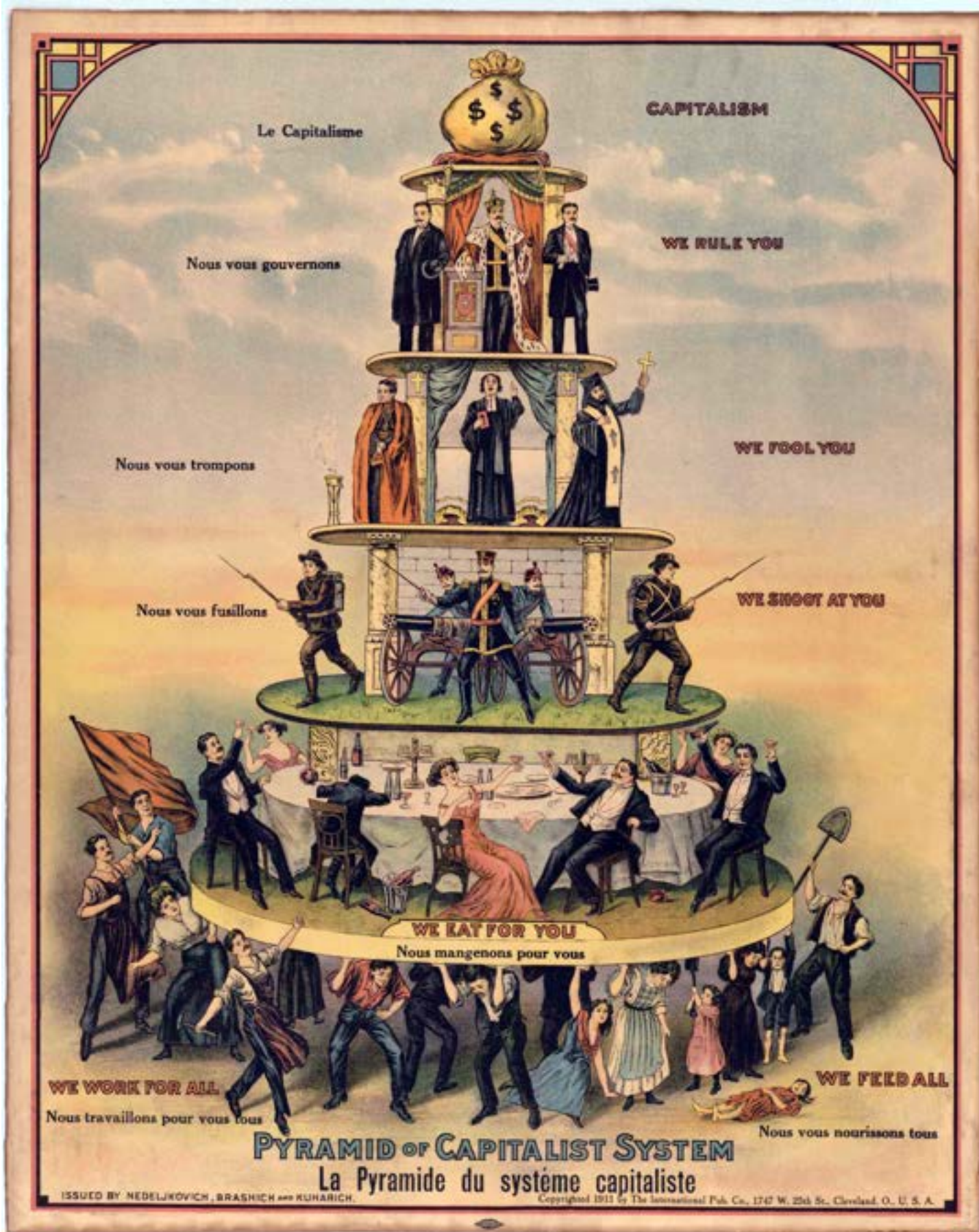
Luxury is...
Exclusive

For as long as there have been societies there have been social hierarchies. Usually, it is every member's goal to rise within this hierarchy. Through having democratized luxury through industrialization and mass production, it has never been easier for people to "buy" themselves into higher ranks than it is today.

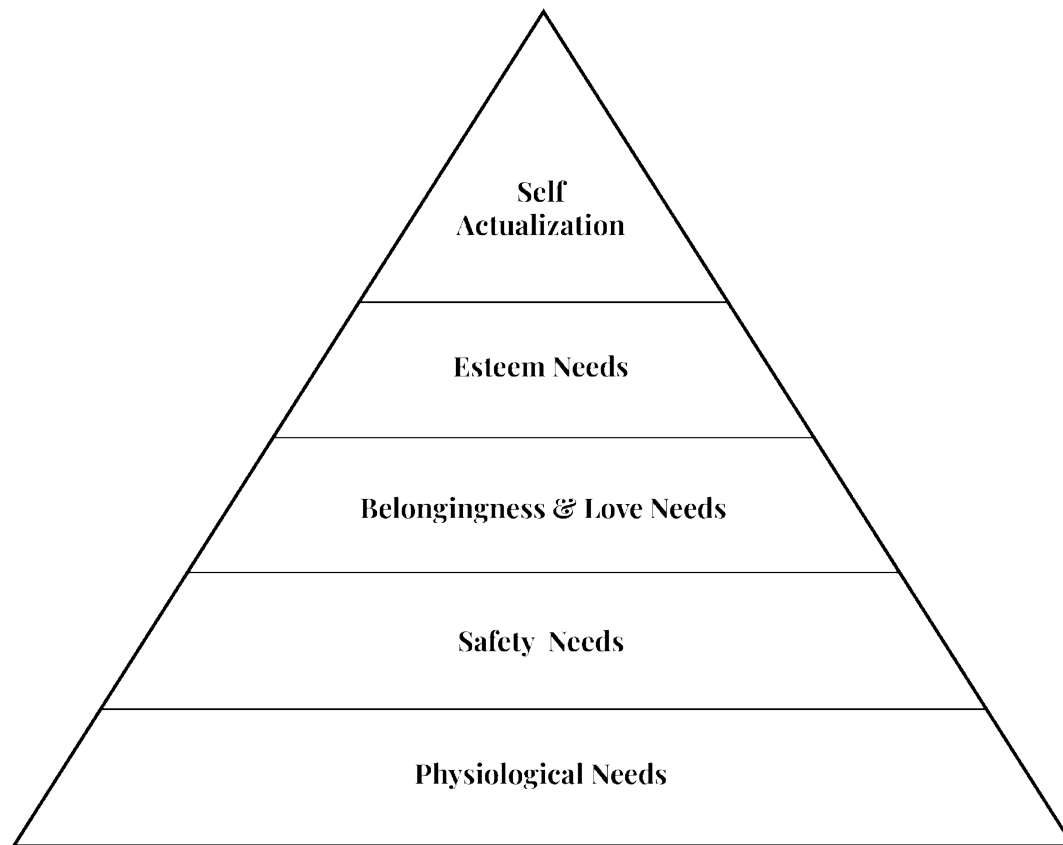
According to Thorstein Veblen in "The Theory of the Leisure Class," the desire for luxury goods is driven by both psychological and sociological motivations. (Veblen & Banta, n.d.)

One of these motivations is social status and prestige: Veblen argues that individuals seek luxury goods as a means of signaling their social status and prestige within society.

The possession of expensive or rare items serves as a visible symbol of one's wealth and standing, allowing individuals to gain recognition and respect from their peers.



and about what we *Desire*.



All human behavior aims to satisfy needs.

Then, what kind of programming, what kind of functions, are to be included within the new public building? How do we determine what we want to define as “luxury”? When asking the people on the streets surrounding the hotel the question: “what is the most precious to you”, they answered: “my loved ones”, “my health”, “my freedom and safety”. And yet when asked how they would define luxury; most answers would point to a materialistic good. They would say: “something I don’t need”. Luxury is indeed a relational term and often defined by its antonym “need”. It is different for everyone where “need” ends and “desire” starts.

More important is the question “why” you would want certain kinds of things that you don’t need. Most times it really isn’t about the desired object itself, but the emotion and status it provides. Professionals within the luxury goods industry know that the thing they are selling is not materialistic, but a tool that meets an instrumental need (Turunen, 2018). One instrumental need is social status.

Maslow describes 5 important categories of human needs and argues that all human behavior aims to satisfy needs. Physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. In his opinion, lower ranked needs (psychological, safety) have to be met before one can strive for higher needs. This has been debated by many peers. Since there are indeed people without a home who indulge in buying things above their budget, for example to satisfy esteem needs through showing off newly bought luxury goods. Generally accepted is that self-actualization is the highest form of need humans are trying to achieve, although very few ever reach it.

Self-actualisation Needs:

This is the highest among the needs in the hierarchy of needs advocated by Maslow. Self actualisation is the desire to become what one is capable of becoming. It is a ‘growth’ need. A worker must work efficiently if he is to be ultimately happy. Here, a person feels that he should accomplish something in his life. He wants to utilise his potentials to the maximum extent and desires to become what one is capable of becoming. A person desires to have challenges and achieves something special in his life or in the area of his specialization. Though every one is capable of self-actualization, many do not reach this stage. This need is fully satisfied rarely.

Esteem Needs:

This category of needs include the need to be respected by others, need to be appreciated by others, need to have power and finally prestigious position. Once the previous needs are satisfied, a person feels to be held in esteem both by himself and also by others. Thus, esteem needs are two fold in nature. Self esteem needs include those for self confidence, self-respect, competence, etc. The second groups of esteem needs are those related to one’s status, reputation, recognition and appreciation by others. This is a type of personal ego which needs to be satisfied. The Organisation can satisfy this need (ego) by giving recognition to the good work of employees. Esteem needs do not assume the motivational properties unless the previous needs are satisfied.

Social Needs:

An employee is a human being is rightly treated as a social animal. He desires to stay in group. He feels that he should belong to one or the other group and the member of the group should accept him with love and affection. Every person desires to be affiliated to such groups. This is treated as basic social need of an individual. He also feels that he should be loved by the other members. He needs friends and interaction with his friends and superiors of the group such as fellow employees or superiors. Social needs occupy third position in the hierarchy of needs.

Security/Safety Needs:

These are the needs connected with the psychological fear of loss of job, property, natural calamities or hazards, etc. An employee wants protection from such types of fear. He prefers adequate safety or security in this regard i.e. protection from physical danger, security of job, pension for old age, insurance cover for life, etc. The safety needs come after meeting the physiological needs. Such physiological needs lose their motivational potential when they are satisfied. As a result, safety needs replace them. They begin to manifest themselves and dominate human behavior. Safety needs act as motivational forces only if they are unsatisfied.

Physiological Needs :

Physiological needs are the basic needs for sustaining human life. These needs include food, shelter, clothing, rest, air, water, sleep and sexual satisfaction. These basic human needs (also called biological needs) lie at the lowest level in the hierarchy of needs as they have priority over all other needs. These needs cannot be postponed for long. Unless and until these basic physiological needs are satisfied to the required extent, other needs do not motivate an employee. A hungry person, for example, is just not in a position to think of anything else except his hunger or food. According to Maslow, ‘man lives by bread alone,’ when there is no bread. The management attempts to meet such physiological needs through fair wages.

(from “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – Theory of Human Motivation” by A.J. Trivedi and A. Mehta)

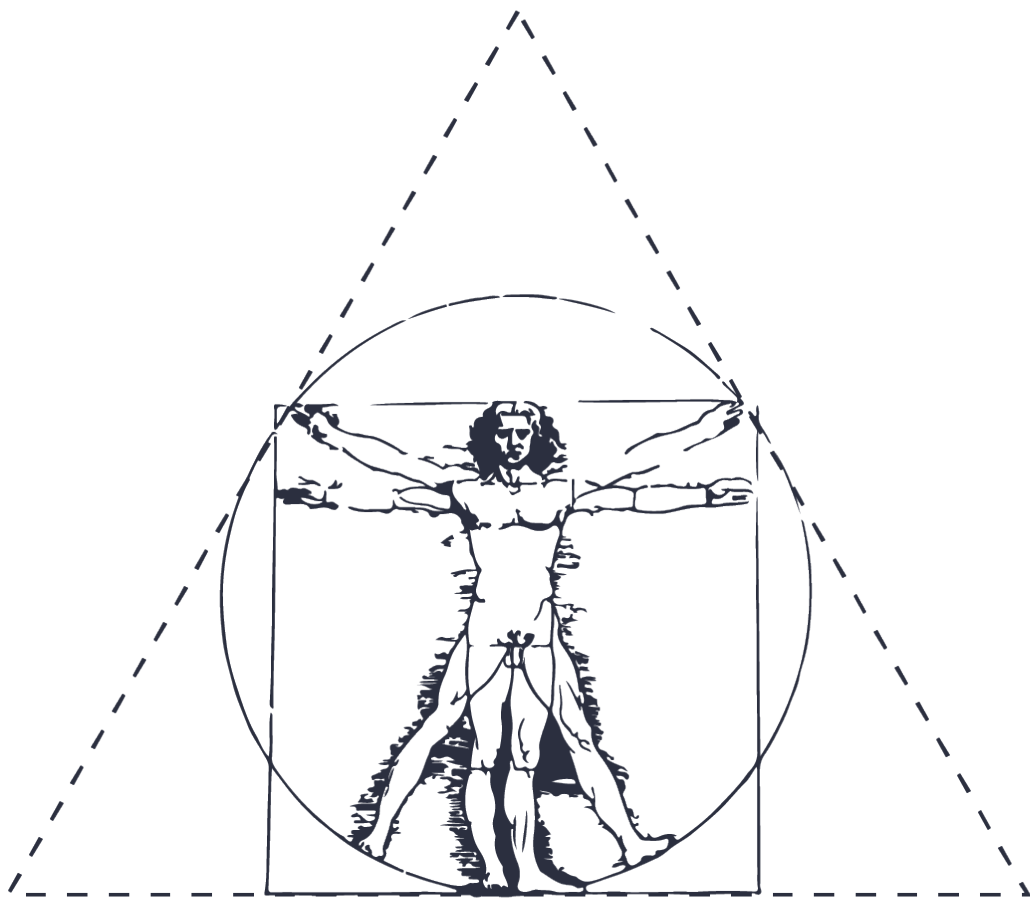
Luxury should be...

Inclusive

Since the new public luxury is supposed to be a luxury for everyone, it seems only logical to provide functions within the building that can satisfy everyone's needs. In this way, the individual can find their own form of luxury fulfilled. We need a space in society where people can have all their needs met so that they can strive to become what we are capable of becoming. There will be a communal kitchen and a canteen that fosters social connection and interaction. For all physiological health related needs, lots of nature and green will be present within the courtyard, as well as doctors' offices, wellness areas and a fitness studio. The building

will get one wing designated to cultural functions, providing a stage for all backgrounds and talents equally, thereby serving our own esteem needs in a way that doesn't require owning anything, but instead getting acknowledgement from simply being oneself. Self-actualization (Maslow) is represented through learning opportunities with functions such as study rooms, an innovation lab, classrooms, and a library. And finally, safety is provided within the building in the form of an 'Artist in Residence' program. Creatives from all walks of life can fall back on these studios to work and live at the same time.





and about what we Need.

Essentials & Facilities

(a place where all needs are met)



Connected Culture

Performance hall
Art Galleries
Rehersal studio
Music room
Curators office

Transcendental Education

Studyhall
Classrooms
Innovation lab
Computer lab
Library
Reading area

Equal Community

Commercial kitchen
Community kitchen
Uitgifte Bali
Self service pantry
Canteen
Conversation pit



Healthy
Well Being

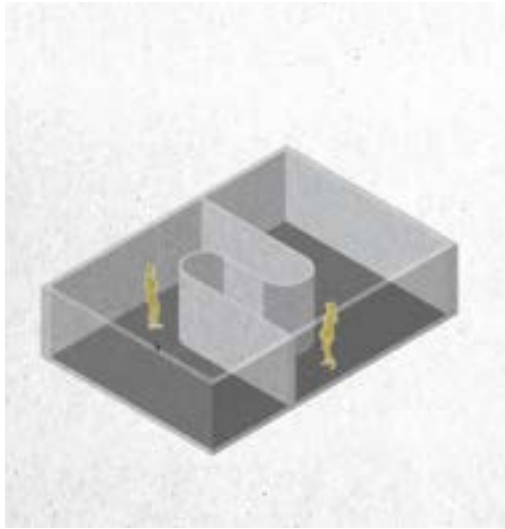
Meditation Room
Yoga hall
Fitness center
Mental health support
Physical therapy room
Counseling rooms
Swimming pool
Whirl pool
Sauna
Doctors office
Green Courtyard

Safe
Housing

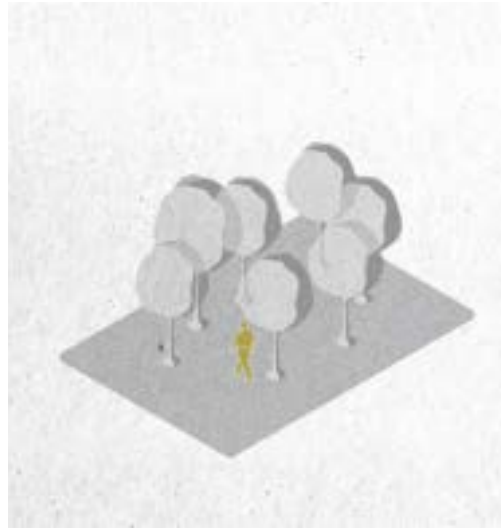
Artist in Residence studios
Free access full-bathrooms

“ It is certainly difficult to regain luxury in architecture in a legitimate and vital way. Luxury does not simply mean waste of material, but only makes sense when it broadens emotional experience by means of new discovery.”

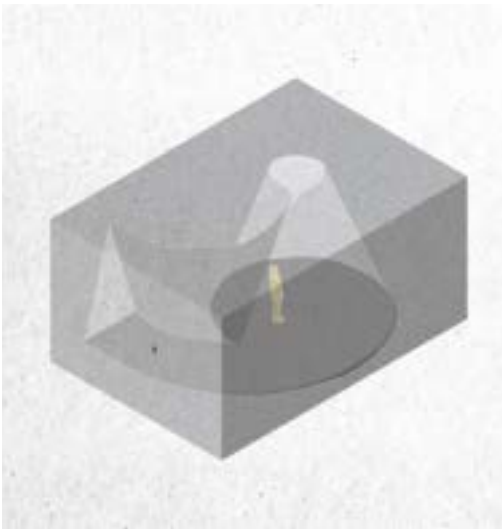
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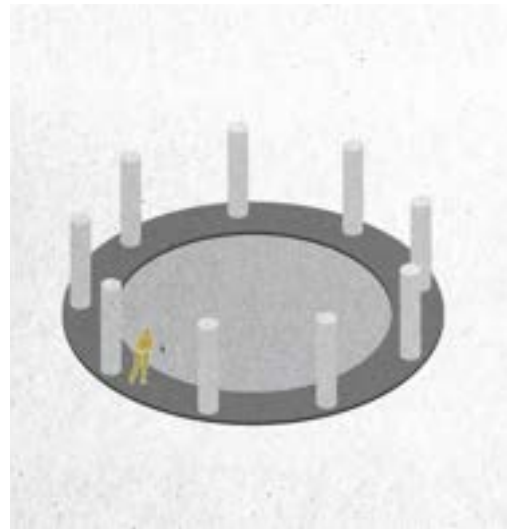
Safe



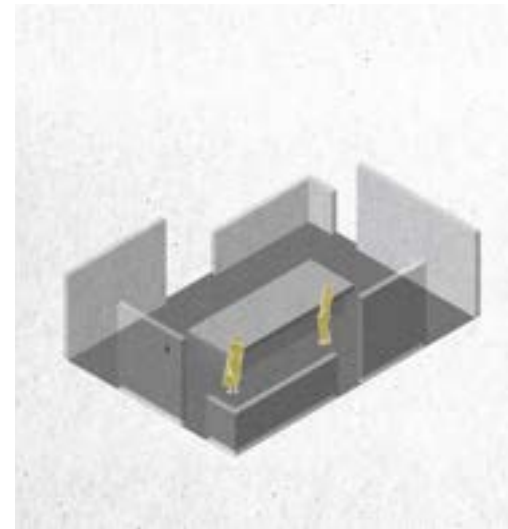
Healthy



Transcendental



Equal



Connected

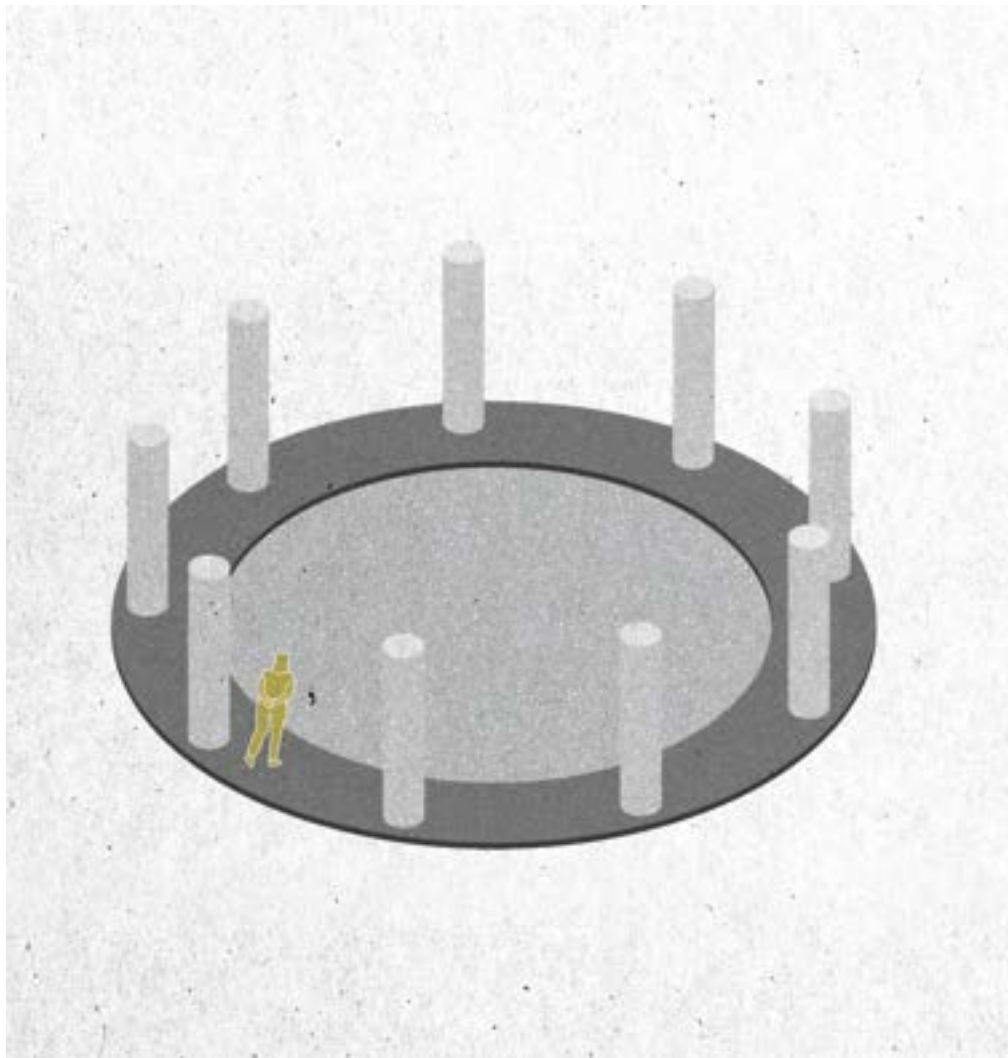
Research by Design. *spatial luxury*

Just like the ancient Roman bathhouses, which were rich in scale but also rich in spatial experience, I wanted to research what kind of spatial quality is needed to evoke certain emotions. What makes a space feel healthy? What is necessary to make it feel safe? How does a space look that makes you feel equal, or connected? And to what or whom?

I designed and experimented with different models, always having some sort of spatial quality in mind. Making cubes of 10x10x10 cm in plaster allowed for freedom in form and construction of the space. It did ask for some spatial insight, since I was designing

from a negative space first. Through placing different scaled people, I could additionally determine on which scale a space has the most impact.

I also learned that there really isn't that one space that makes everyone feel a certain kind of way. How a person experiences their surroundings is highly subjective. The only thing as an architect that I can offer, is to create spaces that have foster the potential to evoke emotions.



Equal

(adjective)

- 1. being the same in quantity, size, degree, or value.**
- 1.2 (of people) having the same status, rights, or opportunities.**
- 1.2. uniform in application or effect; without discrimination on any grounds.**
- 1.3. "evenly or fairly balanced.**

Similar:

unbiased, impartial, non-partisan, fair, fair-minded, just, even-handed, equitable, unprejudiced, unbigoted, non-discriminatory, free from discrimination, egalitarian, neutral, objective, disinterested, without fear or favour, identical, uniform, alike, the same, indistinguishable, matching, twin, comparable, similar, corresponding, commensurate, amounting, proportionate, tantamount, the same as, commensurate with evenly matched, evenly balanced, even, balanced, evenly proportioned, well matched, on a par, level

- 2. having the ability or resources to meet (a challenge).**

"the players proved equal to the task"

Similar:

capable of, fit for, up to, good/strong enough for, adequate for, sufficient for, ready for, suitable for, suited to appropriate for, up to scratch, having what it takes,

(noun)

- 1. a person or thing that is the same as another in status or quality.**

"we all treat each other as equals"

Similar:

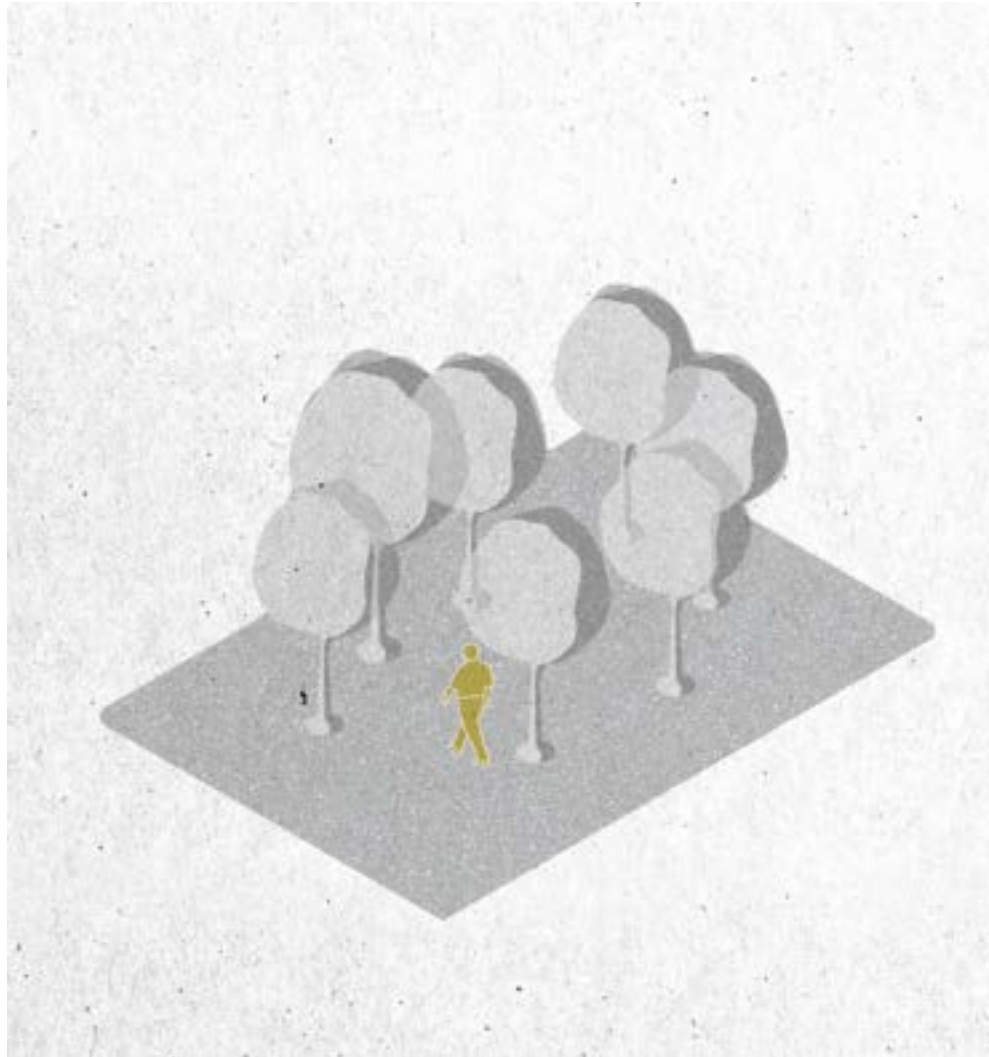
equivalent, peer, fellow, coequal, like, mate, , counterpart, match, parallel, compeer, Opposite:, superior, inferior

(verb)

- 1. be the same as in number or amount.**
- 1.1 match or rival in performance or extent**
- 1.2 be equivalent to.**

Similar:

match, reach, parallel, come up to, measure up to, achieve, be level with, be as good as, be equal/even with, be a match for equate with, be in the same league as, be in the same category as, be tantamount to, rivacompete with contend with vie with, be equal to



Healthy

(adjective)

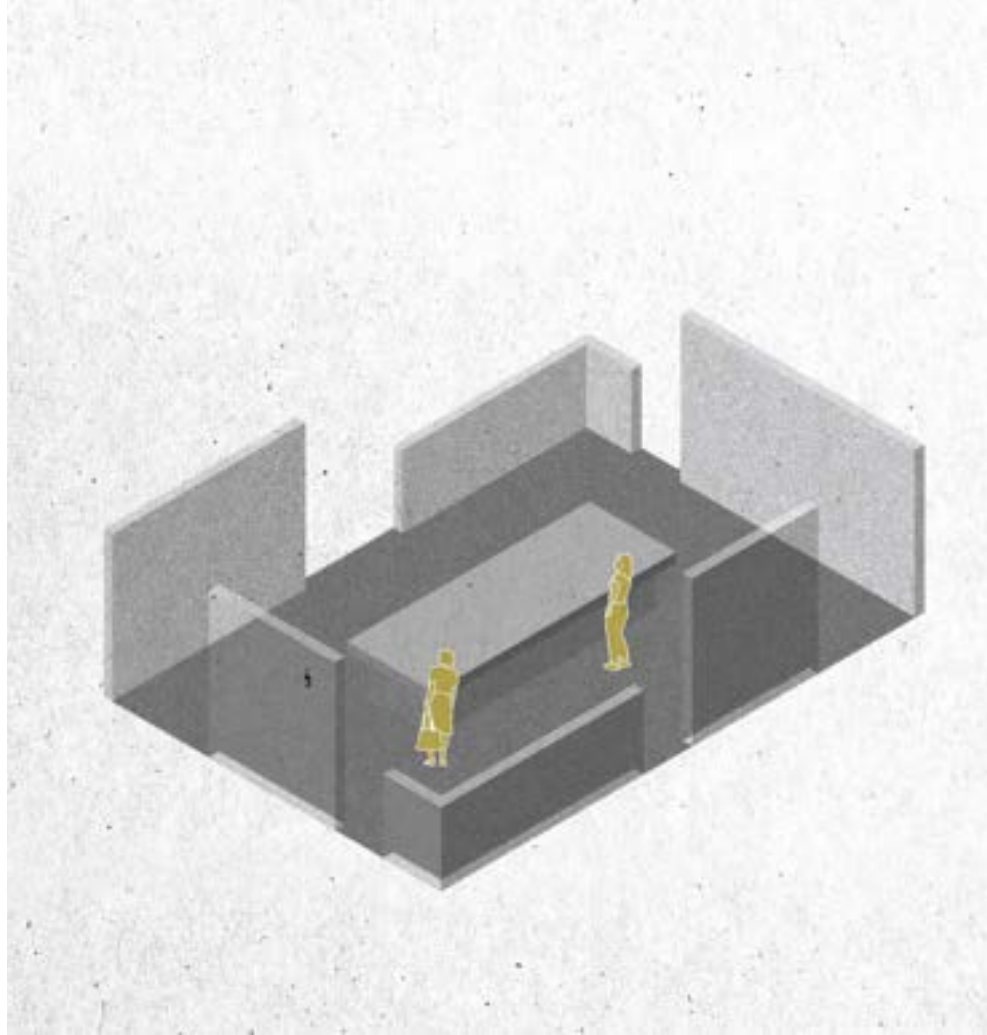
- 1. in a good physical or mental condition; in good health**
- 2. normal, natural and desirable**
- 3. of a very satisfactory size or amount**

Similar:

well, all right, fine, fit, flourishing, hardy, vigorous, hearty, strong, thriving, wholesome

(noun)

the state of being free from illness or injury



Connected

(adjective)

- 1. joined or linked together**
 - 1.1 related by blood or marriage**
 - 1.2 having social, professional, or commercial relationships**

Similar:

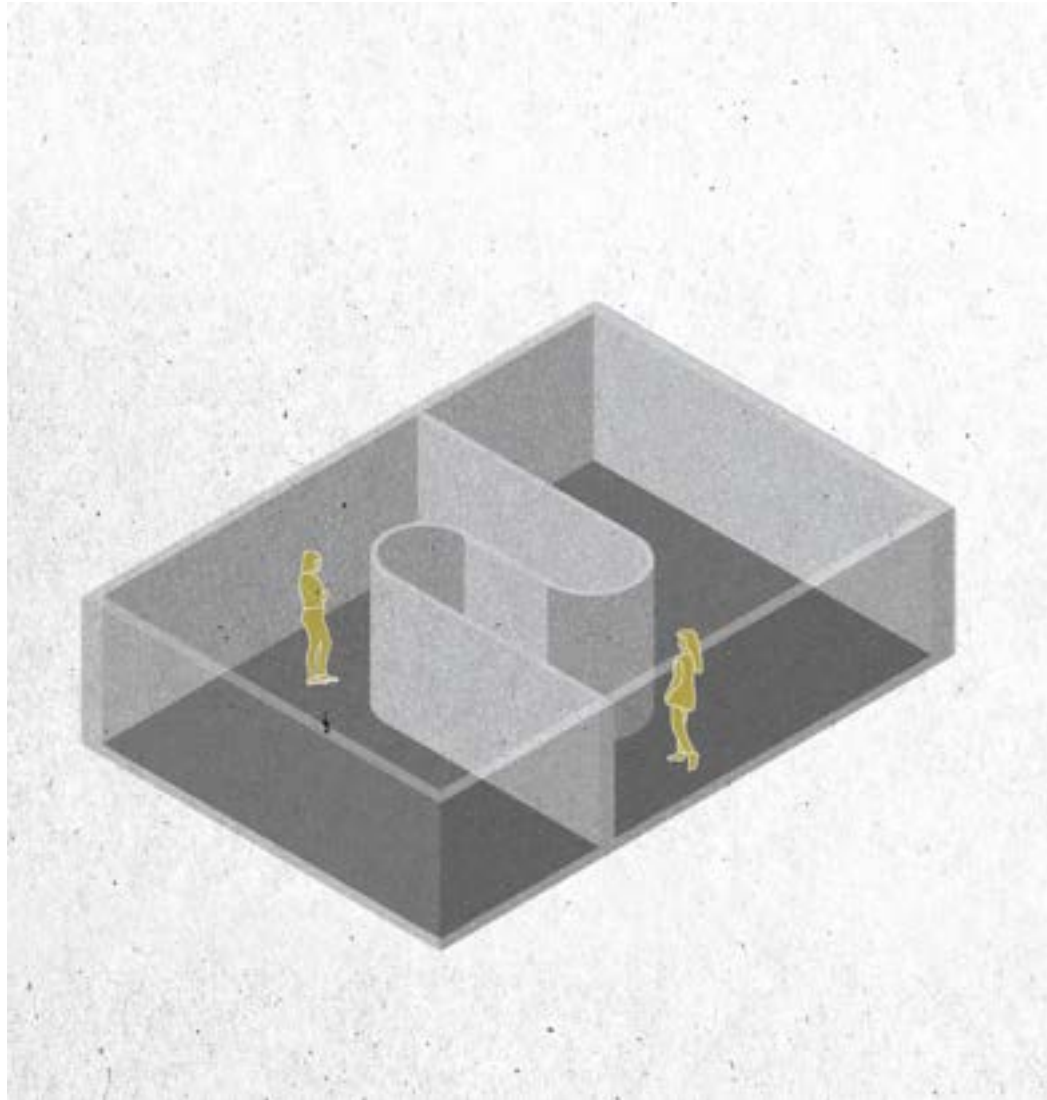
well, all right, fine, fit, flourishing, hardy, vigorous, hearty, strong, thriving, wholesome

(verb)

- 1. brought together or into contact so that a real notional link is established**
 - 1.1 join together so as to provide access and communication**
- 2. associated or related in some respect**
 - 2.1 provide or have a link or relationship with**
 - 2.2 form a relationship or feel an affinity**

(noun)

- 1 a feeling of belonging to or having affinity with a particular person or group.**
- 2 the fact of being or feeling socially, emotionally, spiritually, or professionally linked with others or with another, or the robustness of such relationships**



Safe

(adjective)

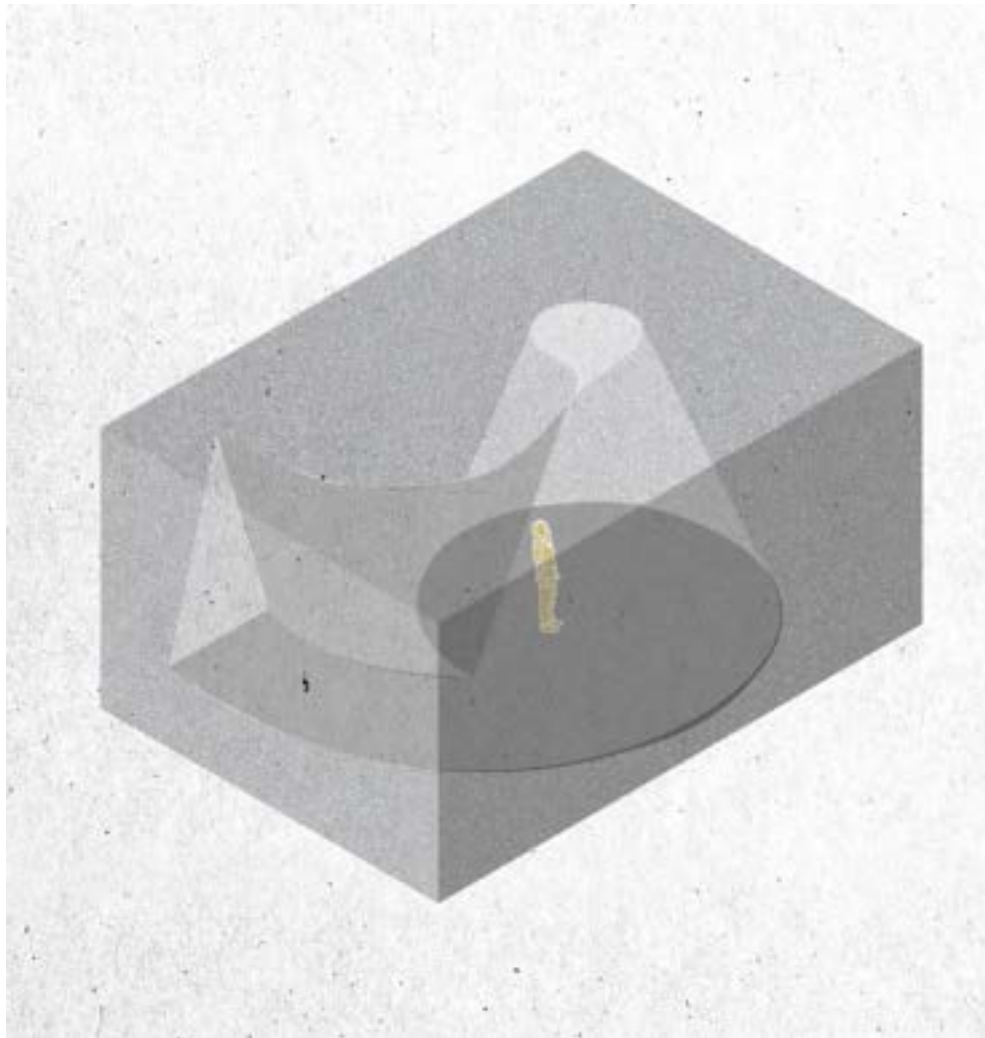
- 1. protected from or not exposed to danger or risk; not likely to be harmed or lost**
- 2. not likely to cause or lead to harm or injury; not involving danger or risk.**
- 3. (of a place) affording security or protection.**
- 4. based on good reasons or evidence and not likely to be proved wrong.**

Similar:

unharmed, all right, alive and well, well, unhurt

(noun)

a strong fireproof cabinet with a complex lock, used for the storage of valuables



Transcendental

(adjective)

1. relating to a spiritual realm.
2. (in Kantian philosophy) presupposed in and necessary to experience; a priori.
3. of or relating to knowledge of the presuppositions of thought
4. beyond our experience of phenomena, although not beyond potential knowledge

Similar:

supernatural, preternatural, transcendent, other-worldly, superhuman

(verb)

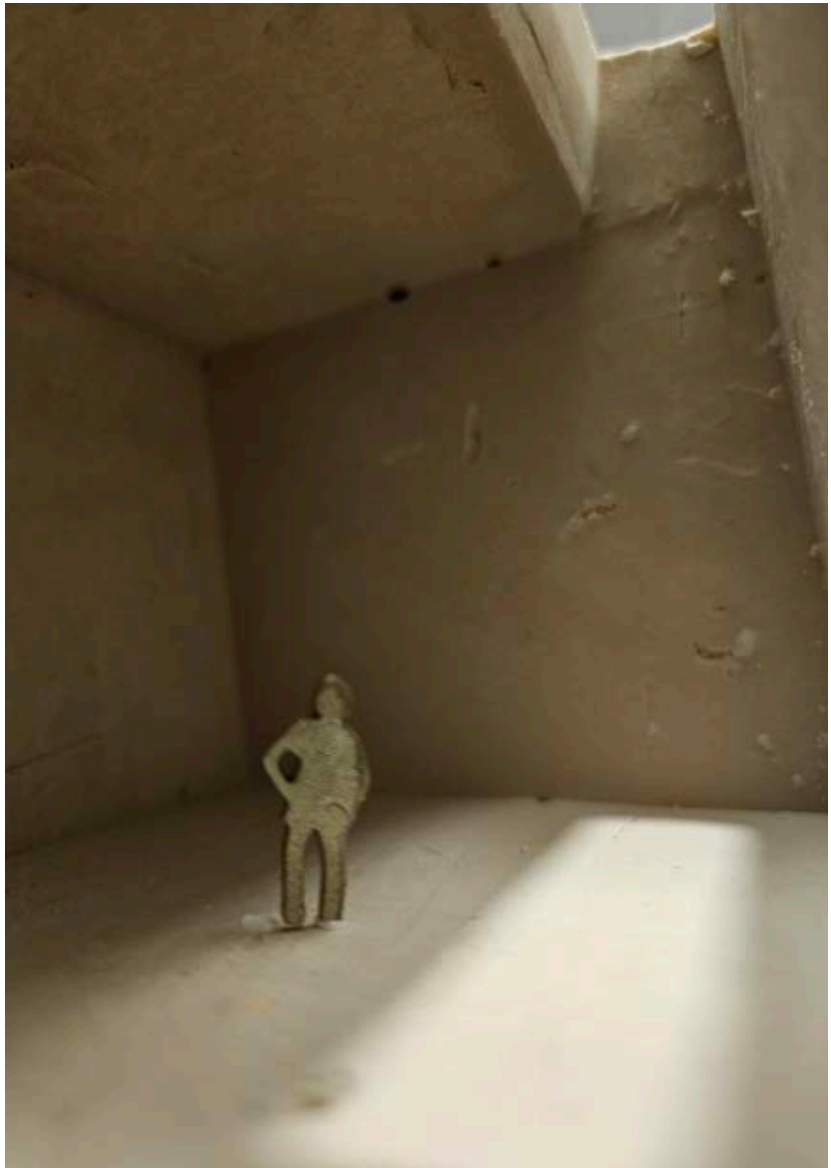
1. be or go beyond the range or limits of (a field of activity or conceptual sphere)
2. surpass (a person or achievement)

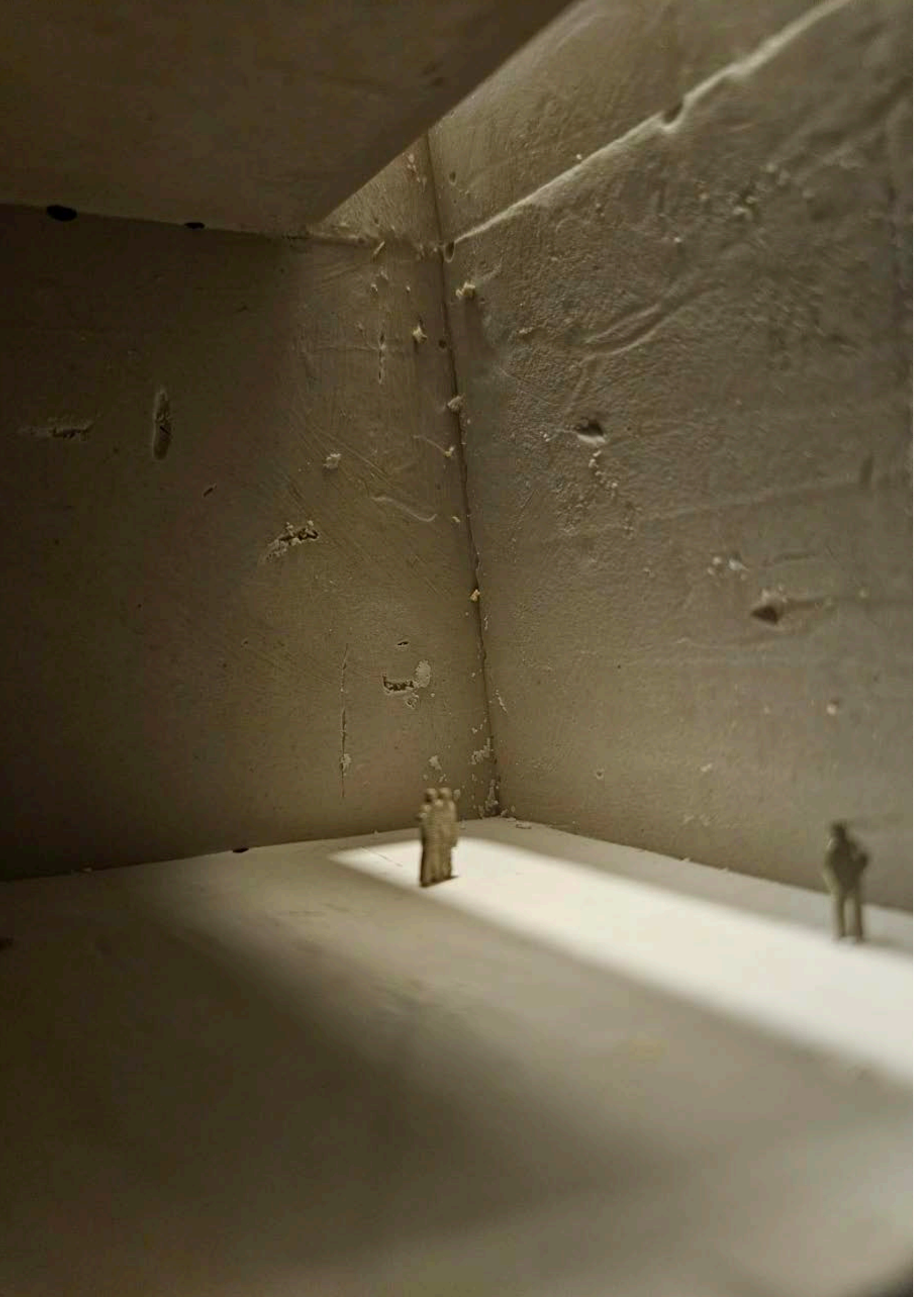


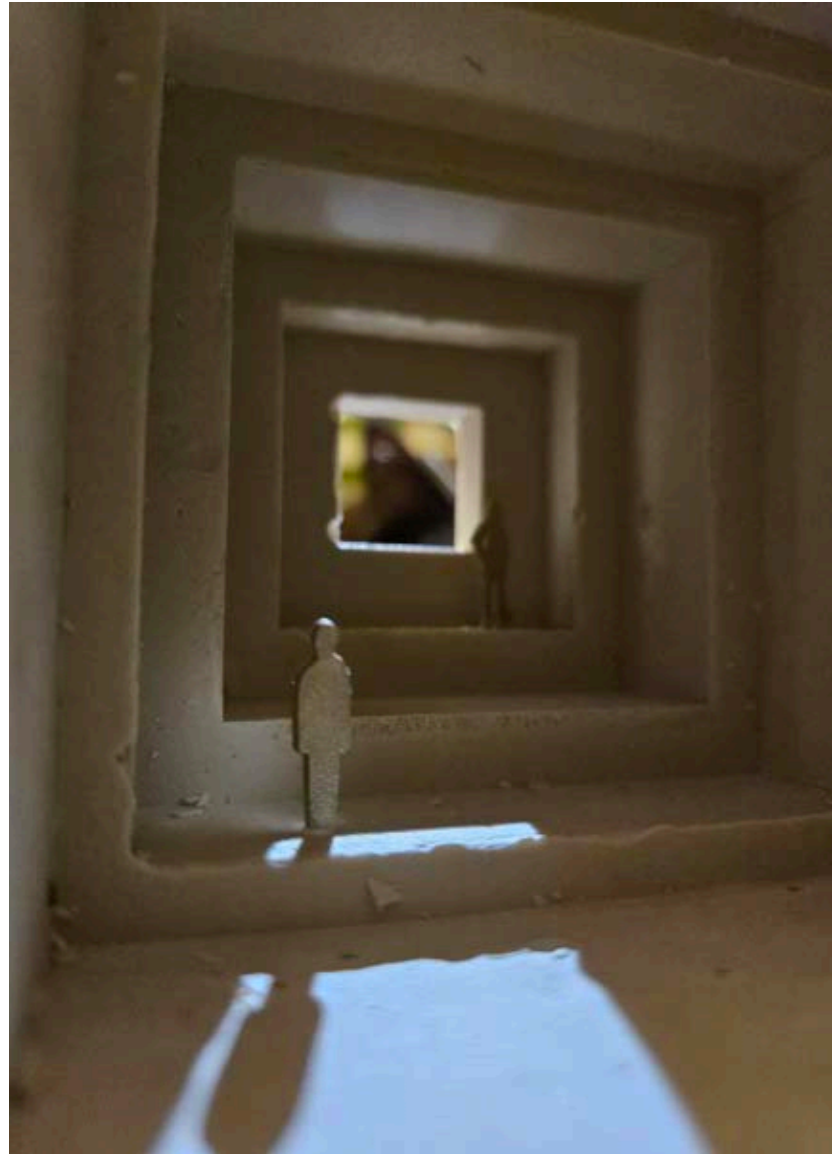


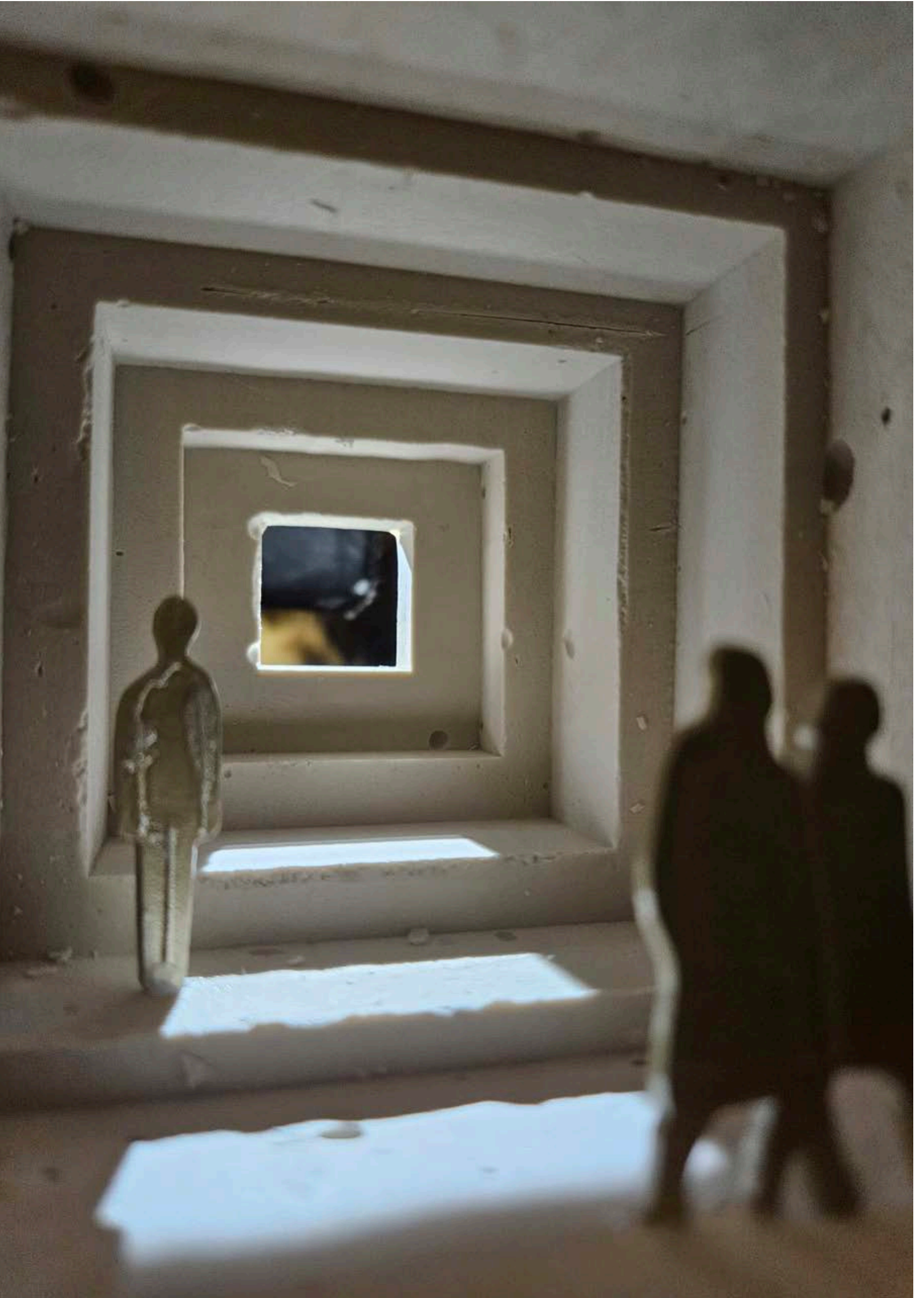




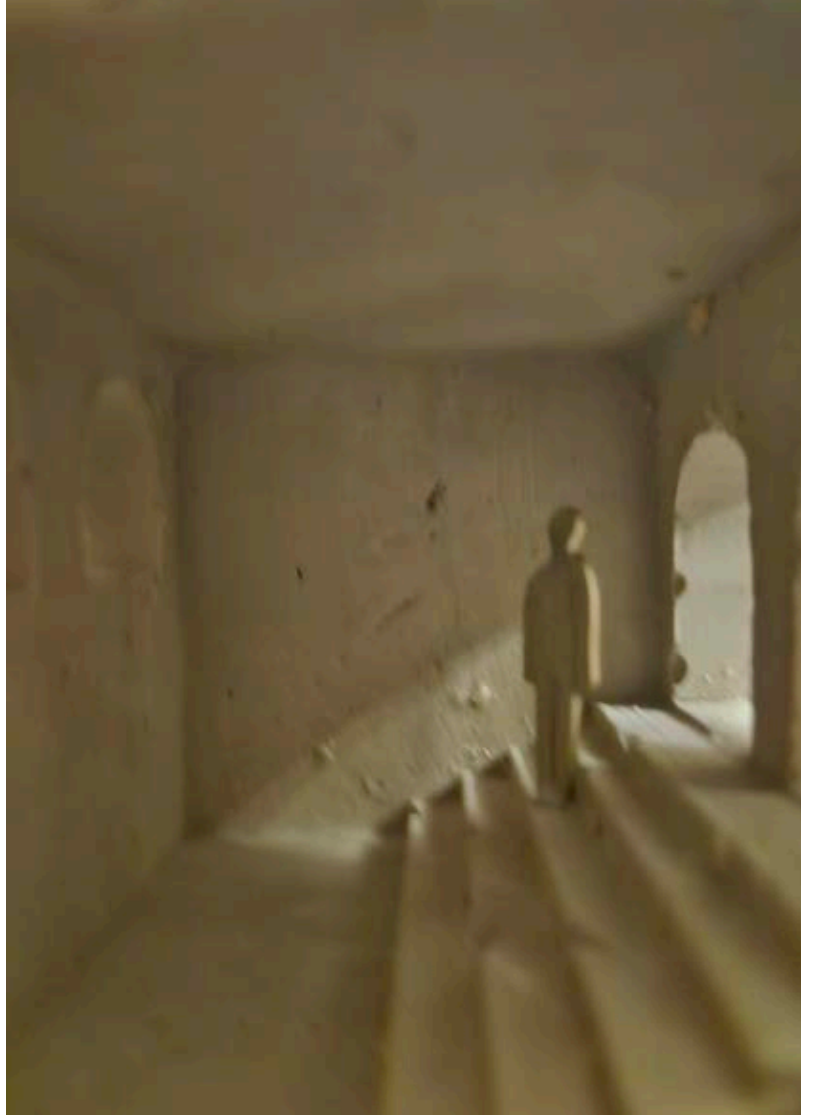










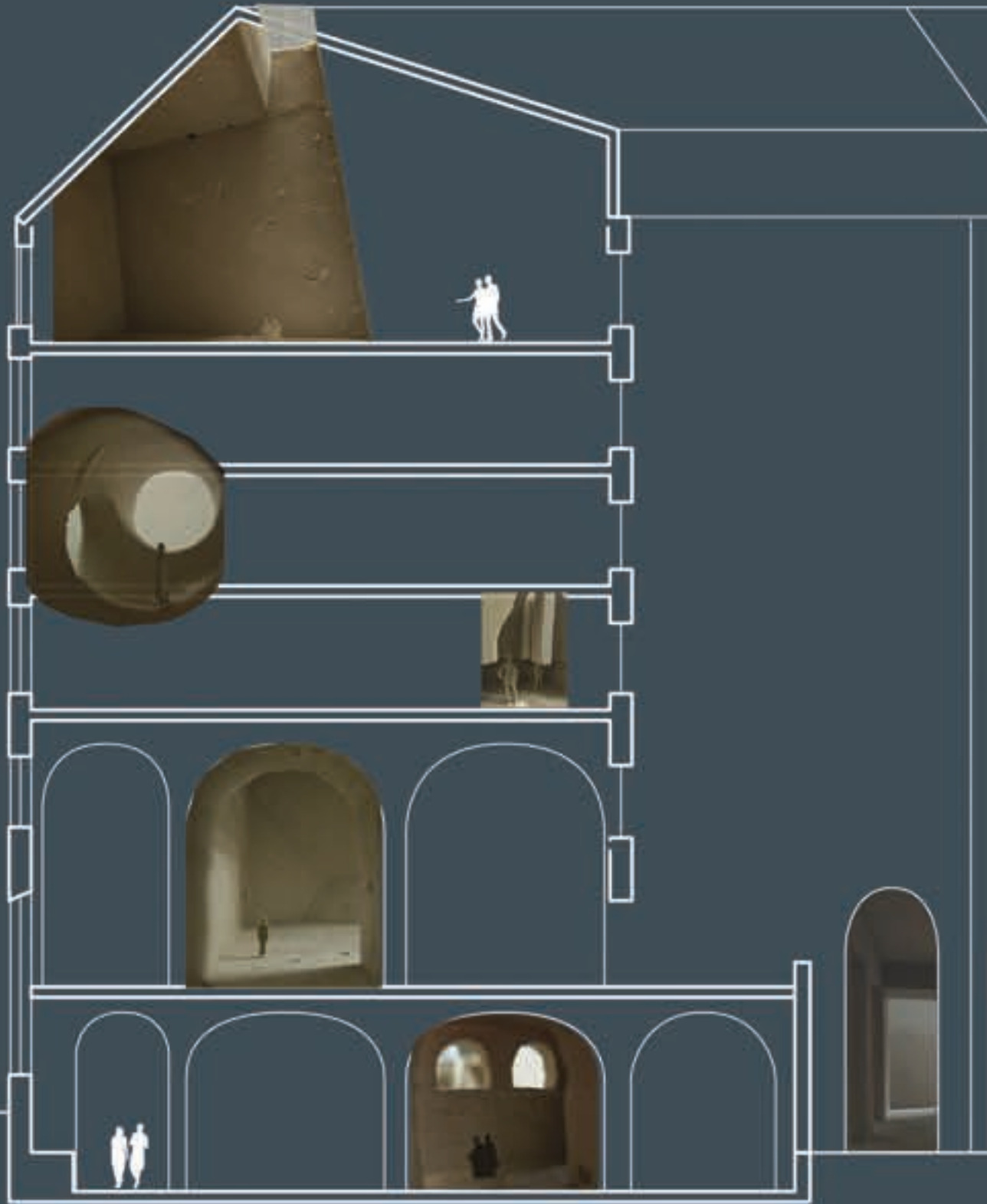


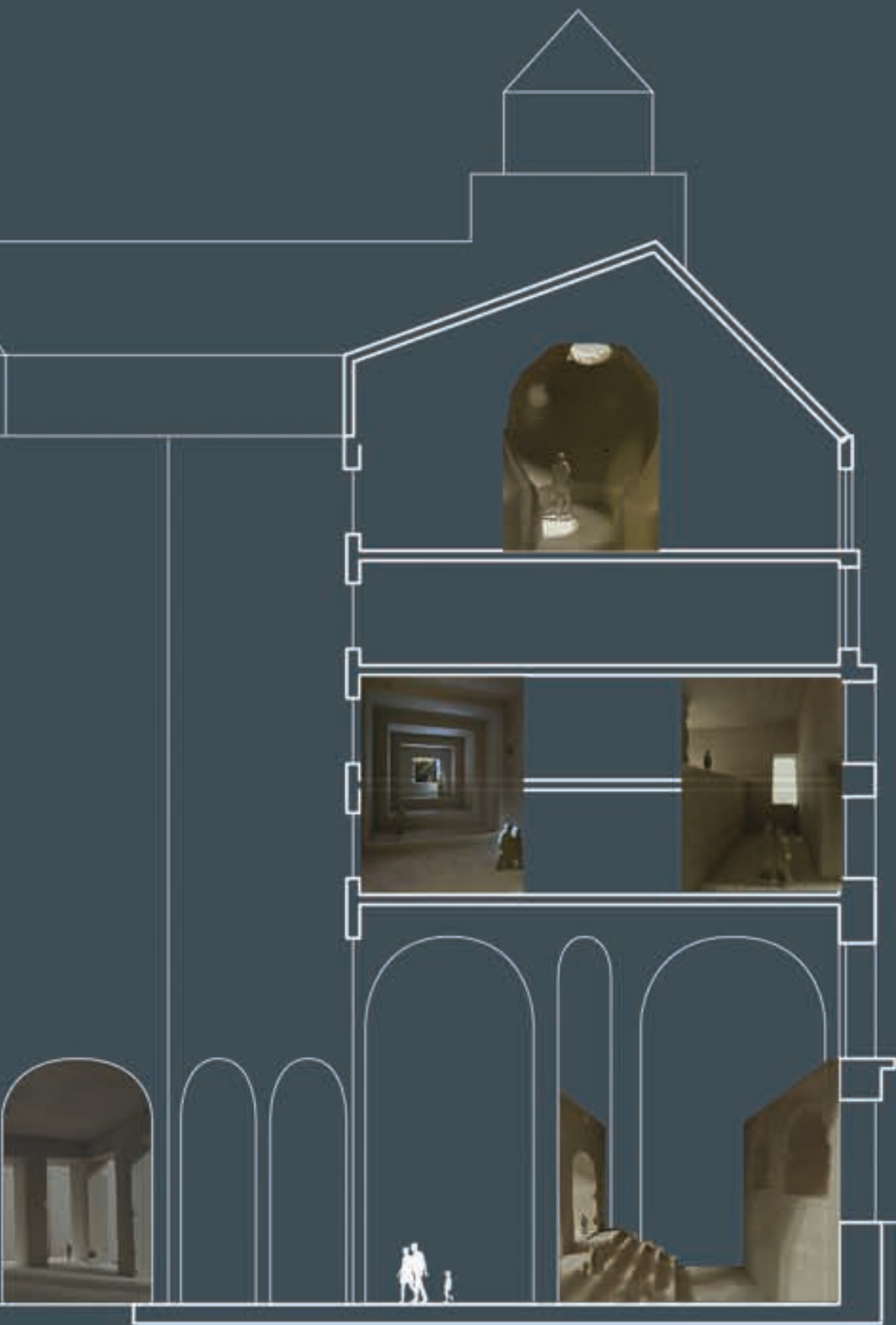












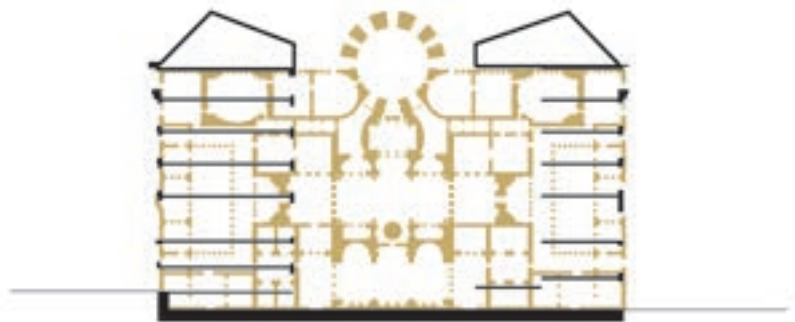
Deconstructing the Existing & integrating the new

Stripping the building to its weight bearing structure internally and demolishing the courtyard facade.



Designing through the section Function follows form

“Broadening emotional experience by means of new discovery” will be the goal for any additions made. Designing exciting new rooms within the existing context first and then linking possible functions to it.



All Inclusive creating relations and routing

Treating inclusivity as the new definition of luxury, the building will be welcoming and open for everyone and everything. All internal functions should relate to each other and allow the visitor to see and experience the whole building unhindered.



Resstructuring.

design principles

Usually when we architects design or transform a building, we are given a program of functions and square meters, which are then to be worked into a spatial layout, also known as a floorplan. Of course, it is not only efficiency that guides the designing hand, but more often than not, all qualitative spaces and extraordinary parts are “economized” and taken out of the design due to cost reduction. What is left is a compromise of quality and economy.

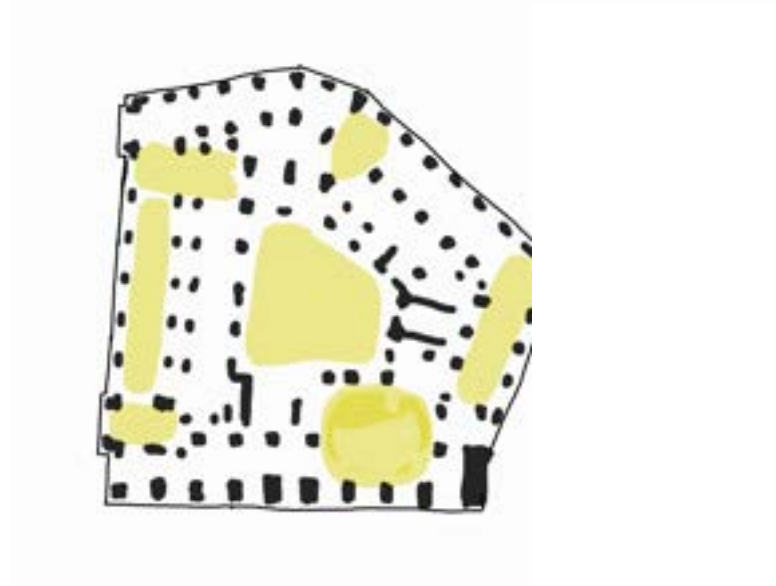
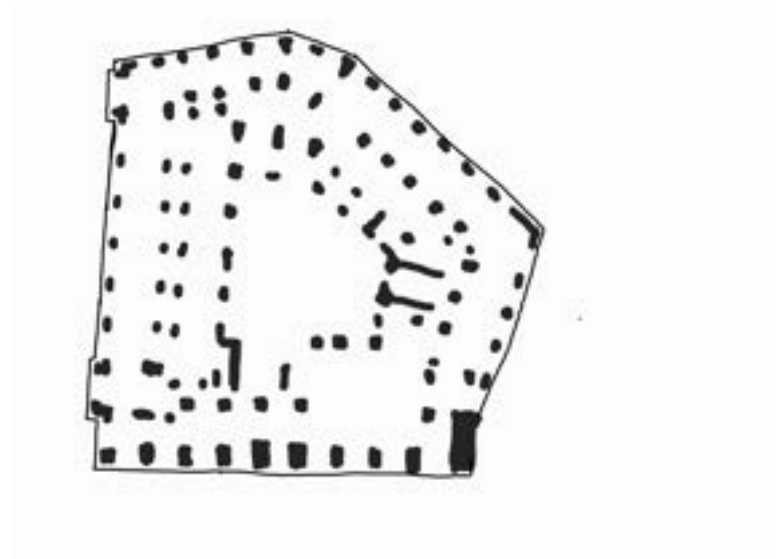
No such compromises will be made within this project. I allowed myself to design with a magnitude of space and quality. In the metamorphosis of the Handelshof, the credo “Function follows form” becomes the guiding principle. The absence of a predetermined purpose during the transformation process allows for exploration and experimentation, emphasizing spatial quality over mere efficiency. In breaking through floors and ceilings, square meters are reduced, but spatial quality is won. Of course, these measures rely on carefully supporting the structure where parts are taken out.

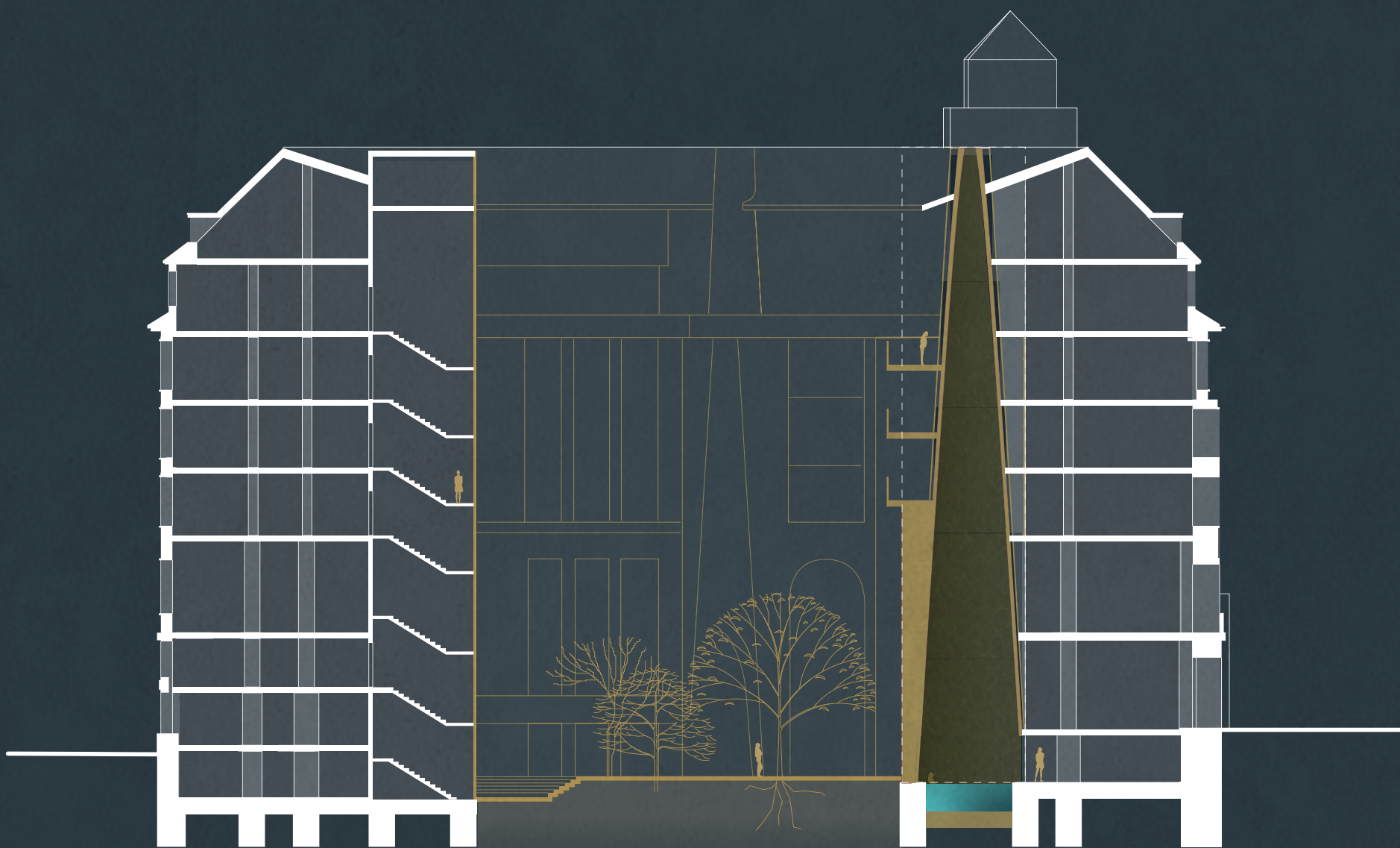
The integration of the old and the new is exemplified in the construction details. Existing columns bear the remnants of removed floors, now serving as decorative capitals. The addition of wood strategically reinforces the structure, creating a harmonious blend

of materials. This careful approach ensures that the transformation is not only functional but also narratively rich, with the visible traces of the building’s evolution becoming part of its character.

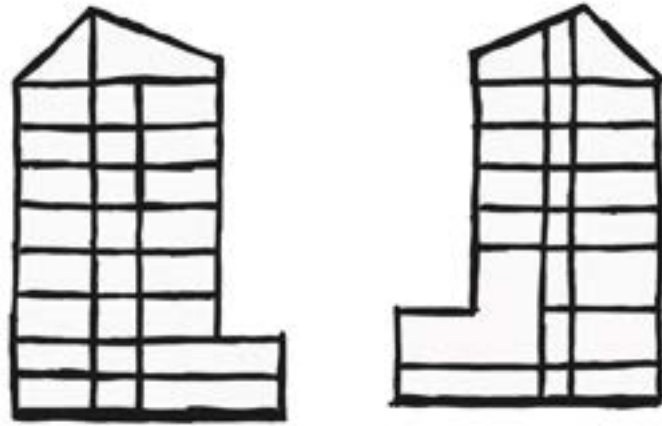
Inclusivity stands at the core of the design concept. In repositioning the entrance of the building toward the adjacent square, all people are welcomed in, and the adjacent square is activated. Where earlier the glass facade of shops and banks only invited paying customers in - and kept people from using the building throughout the night - a passageway is created that leads the visitor right into the heart of the complex: A new green courtyard, a healthy urban oasis that gives people a place to rest, to breathe and to enjoy nature. There will be no door or gate that closes this entry. From the start it will be an inclusive space for everyone. From within the courtyard all other functions are accessible and visible.

Deconstructing the Existing
& integrating the new

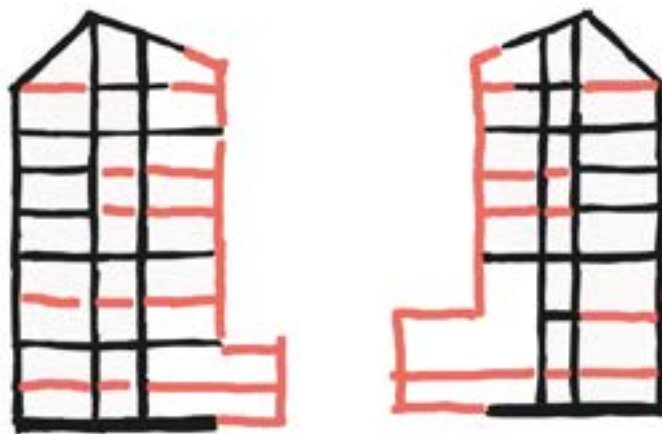




Designing through the section
Function follows form



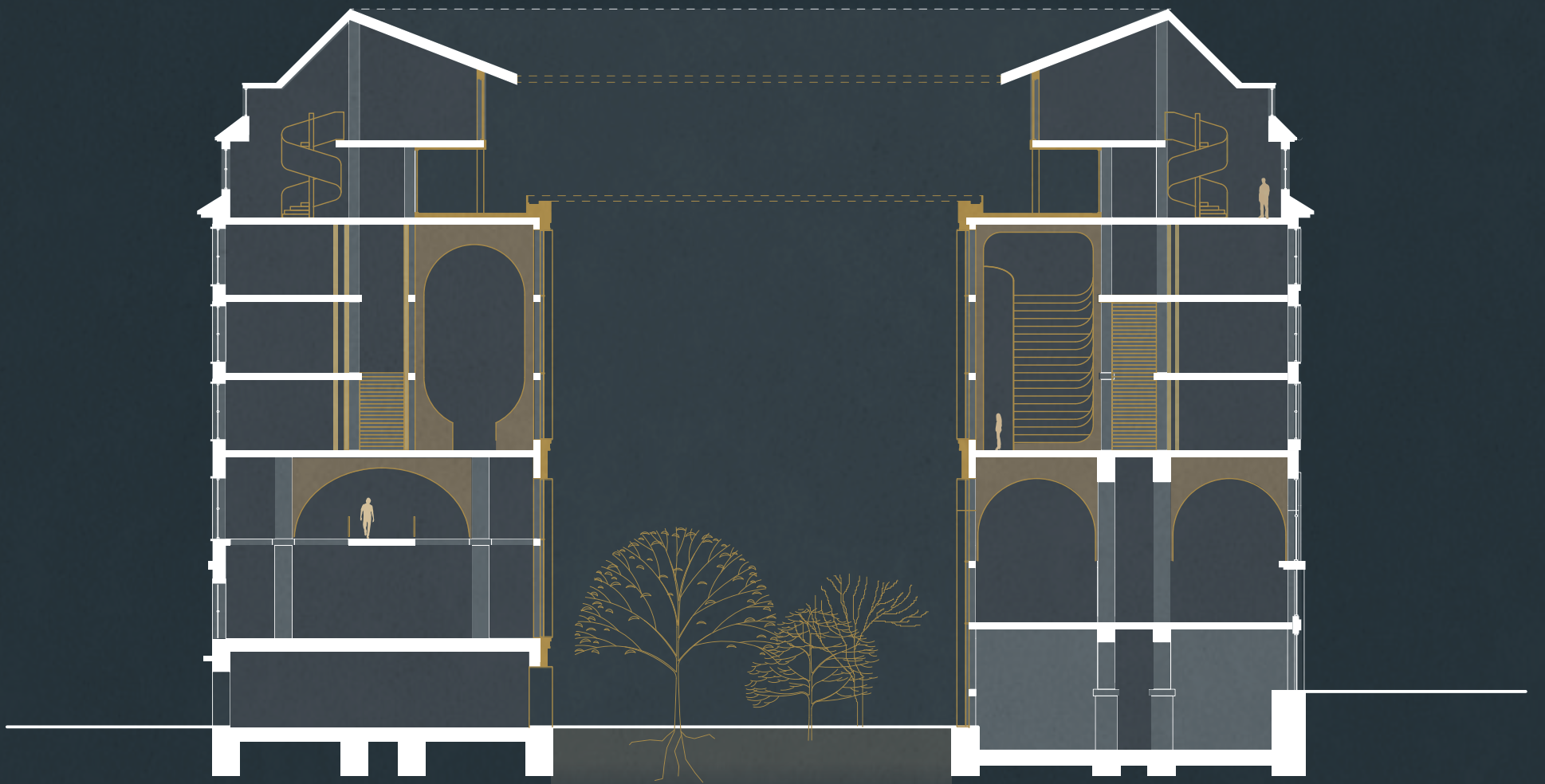
Existing



Taking away

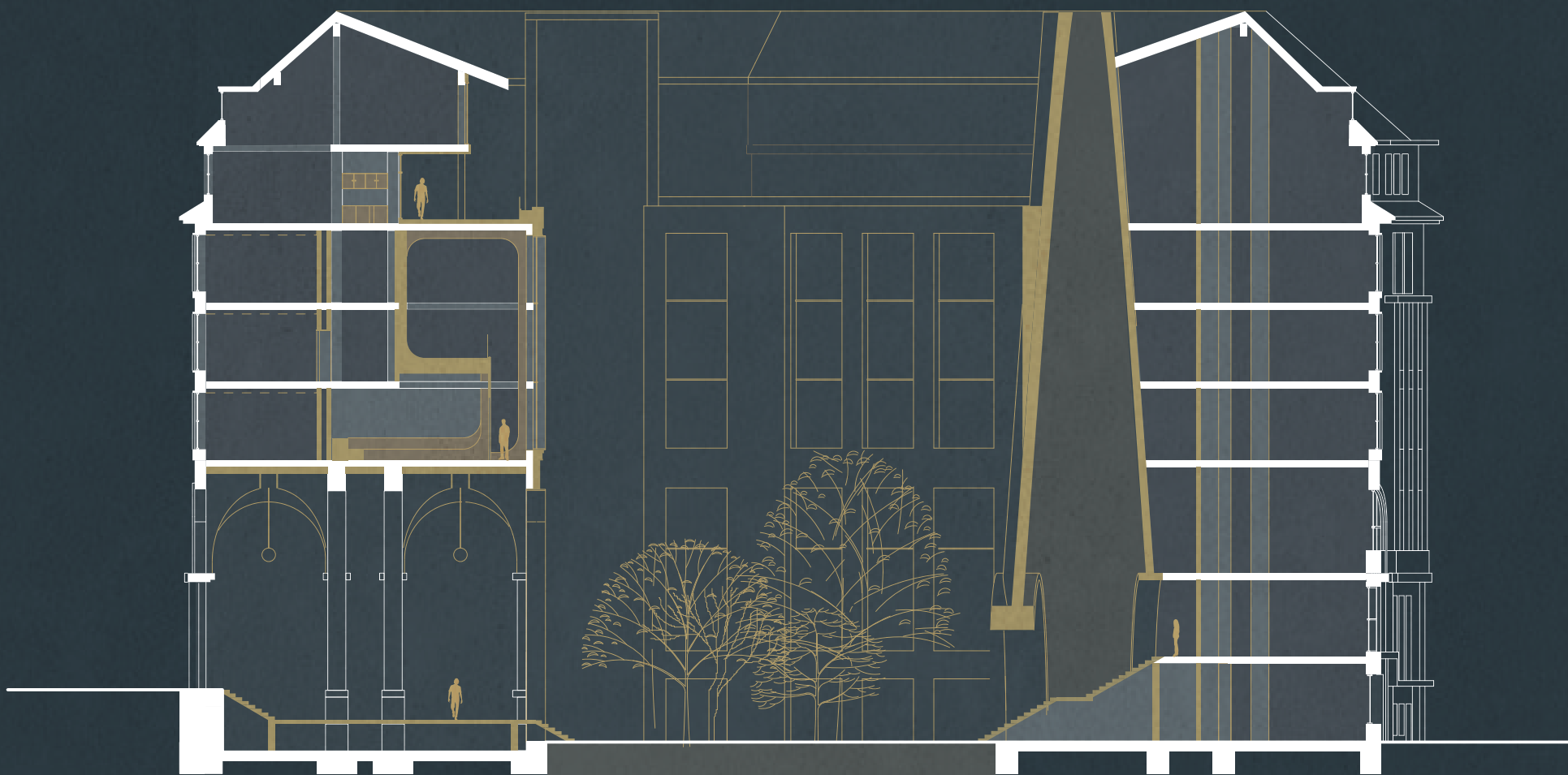


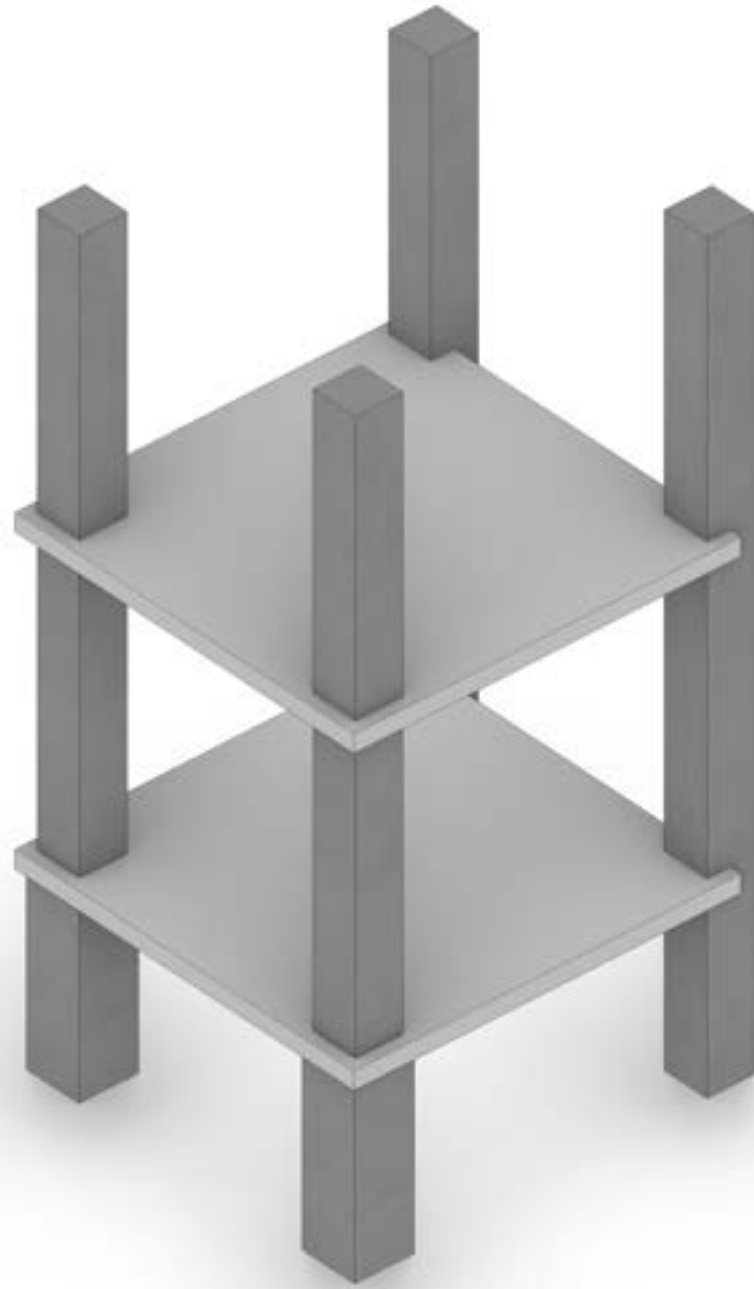
Adding

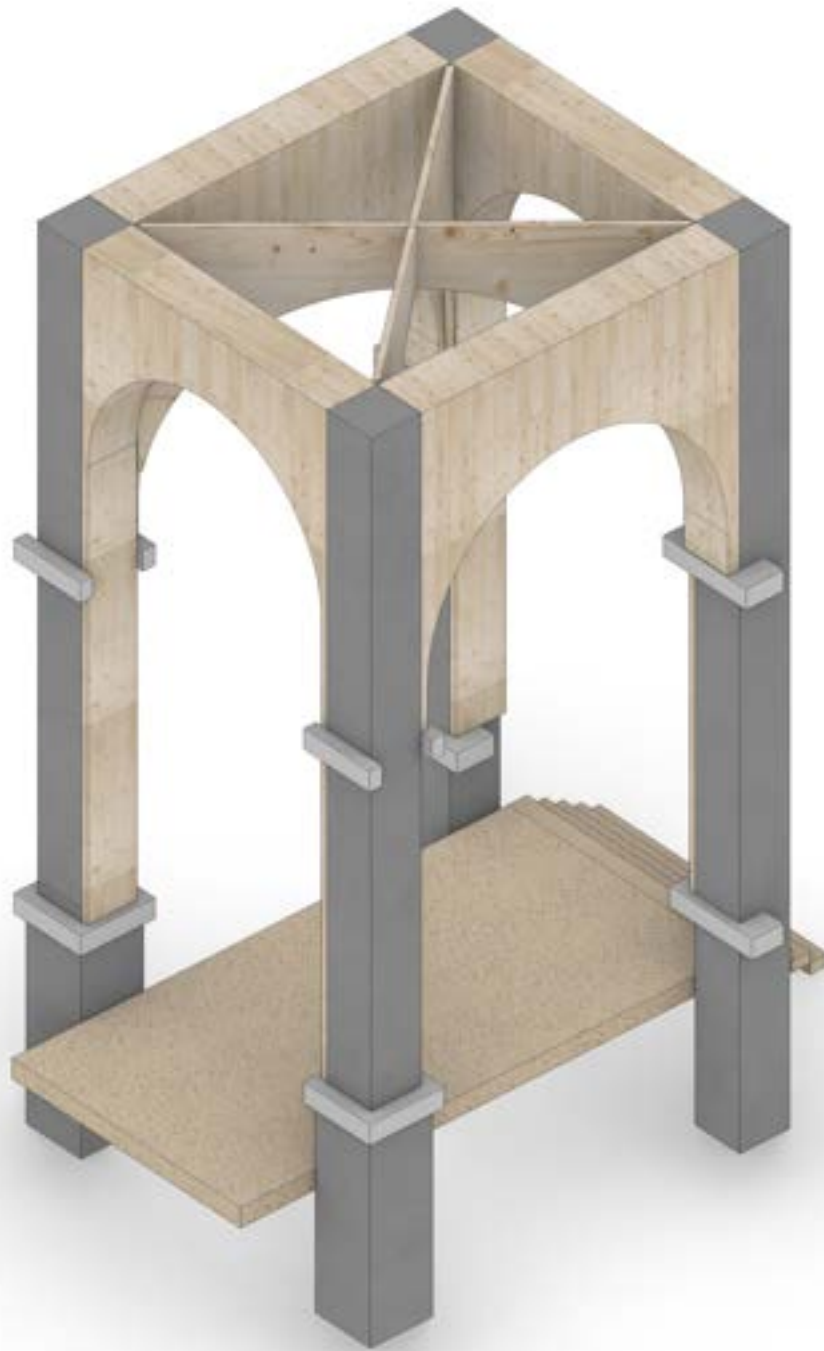


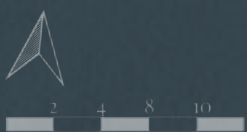
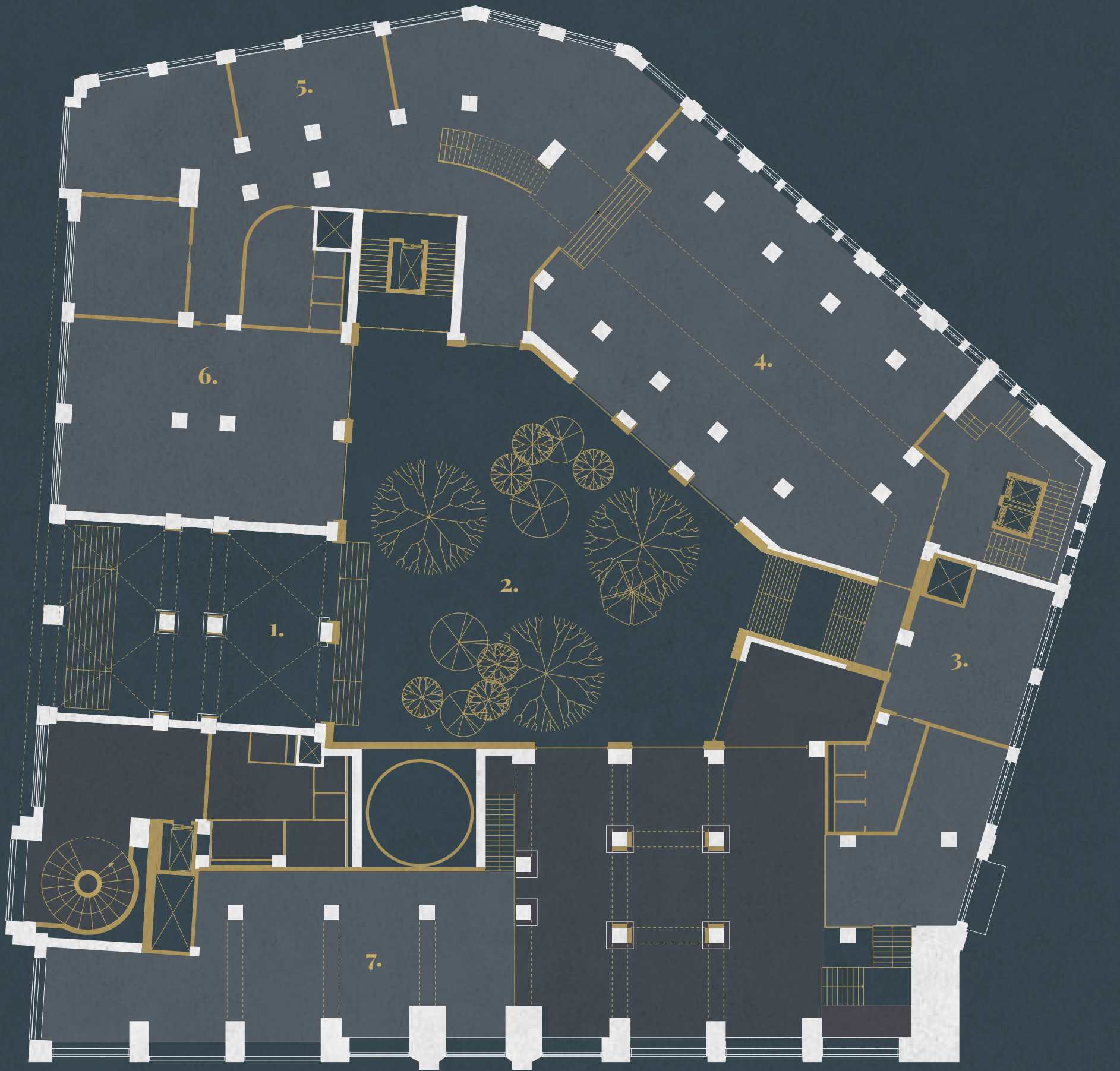
All Inclusive
creating relations and routing





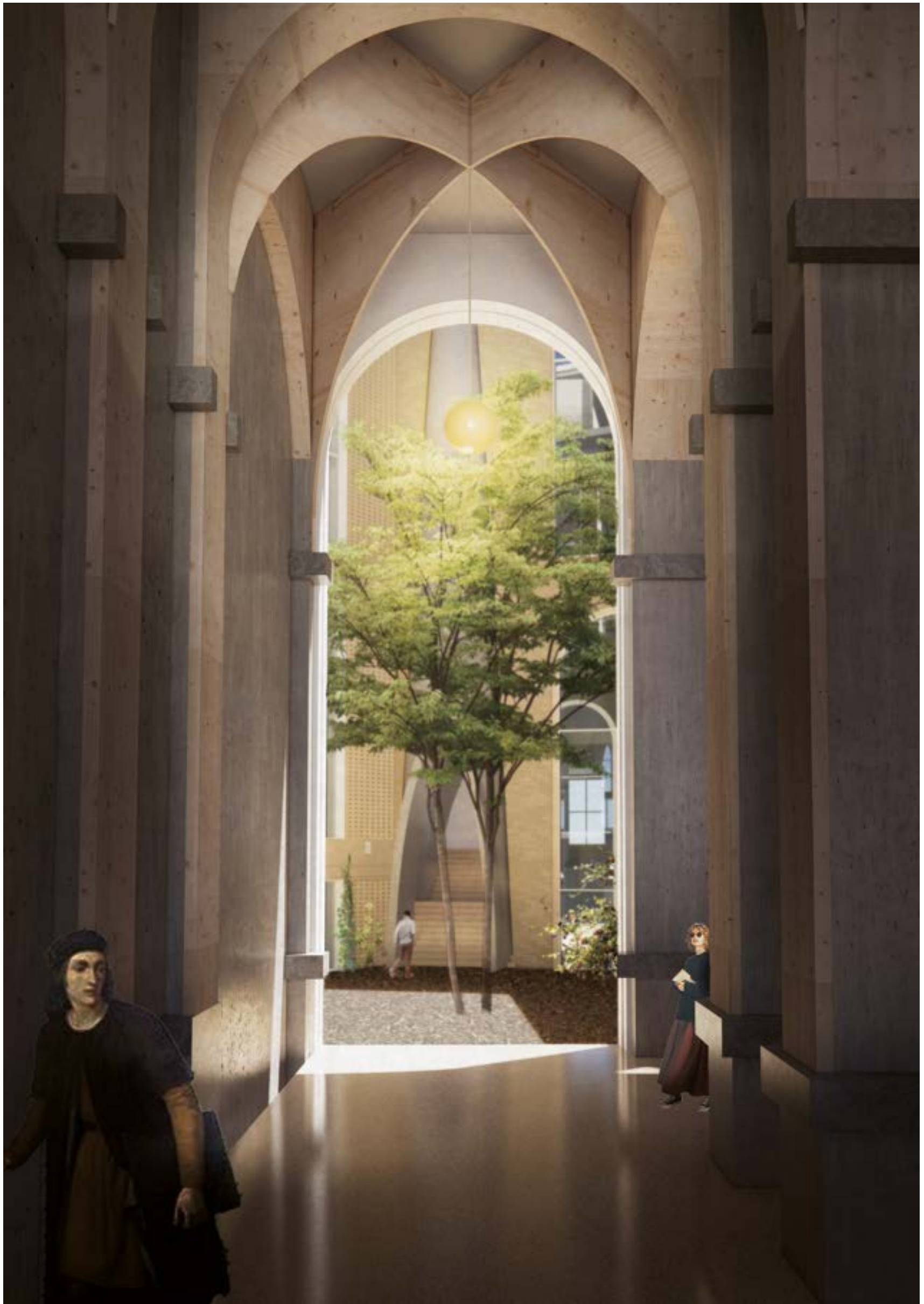


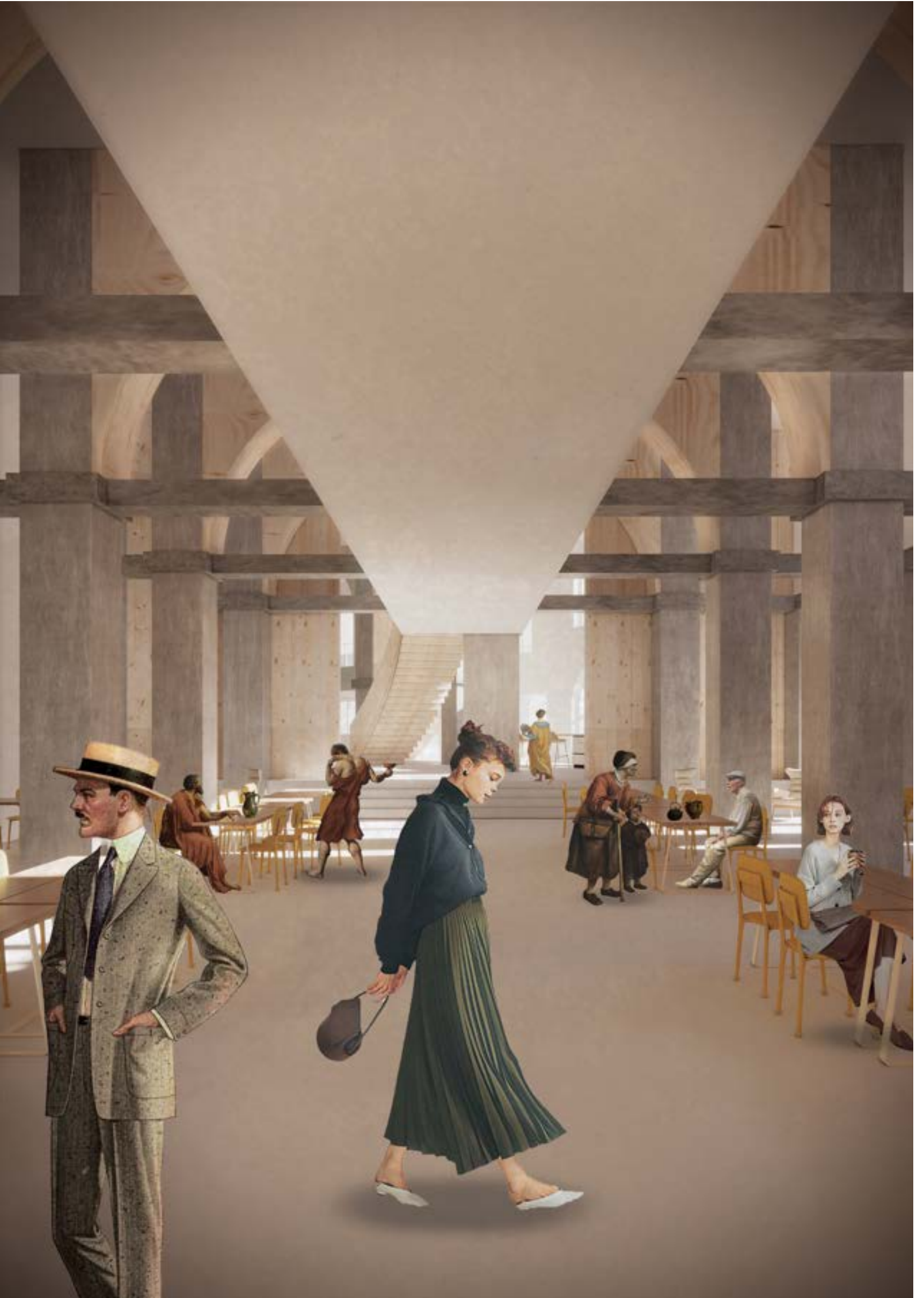


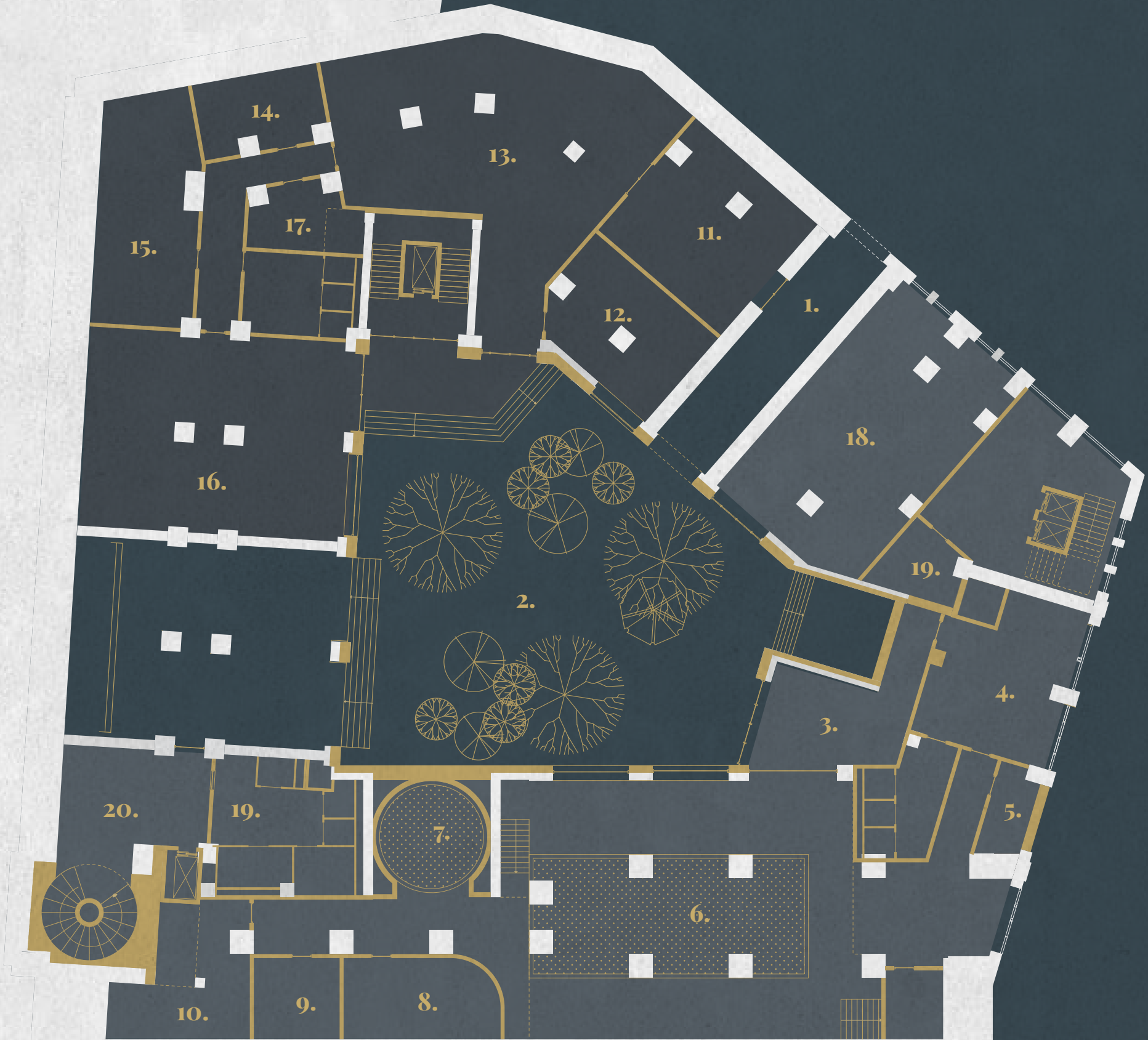


00. Groundfloor

- 1. Entrance Hall*
- 2. Courtyard*
- 3. Lockers*
- 4. Canteen*
- 5. Food service*
- 6. Meeting room*
- 7. Lounge Area (Wellness)*



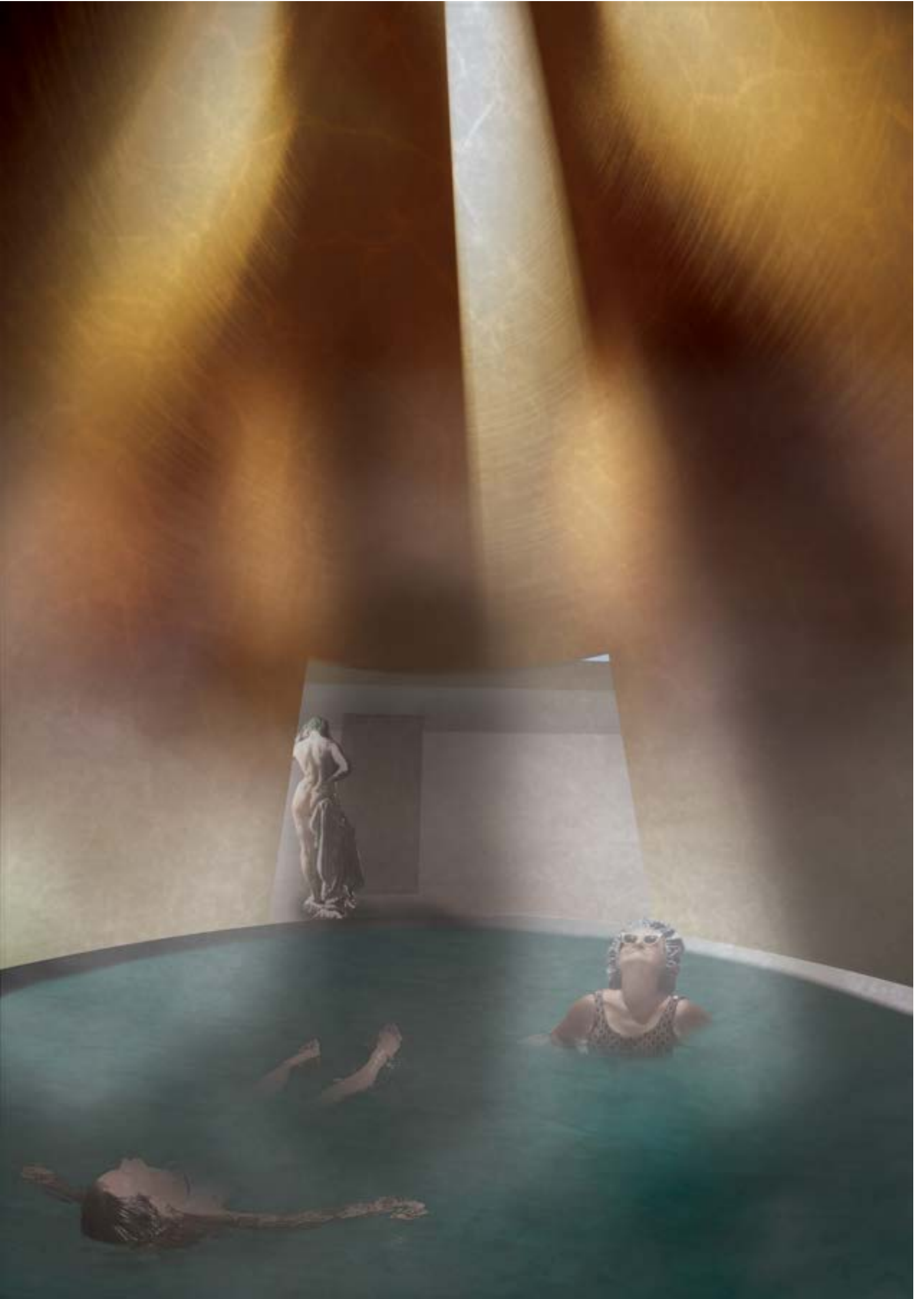


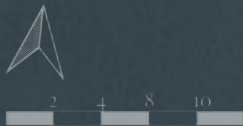
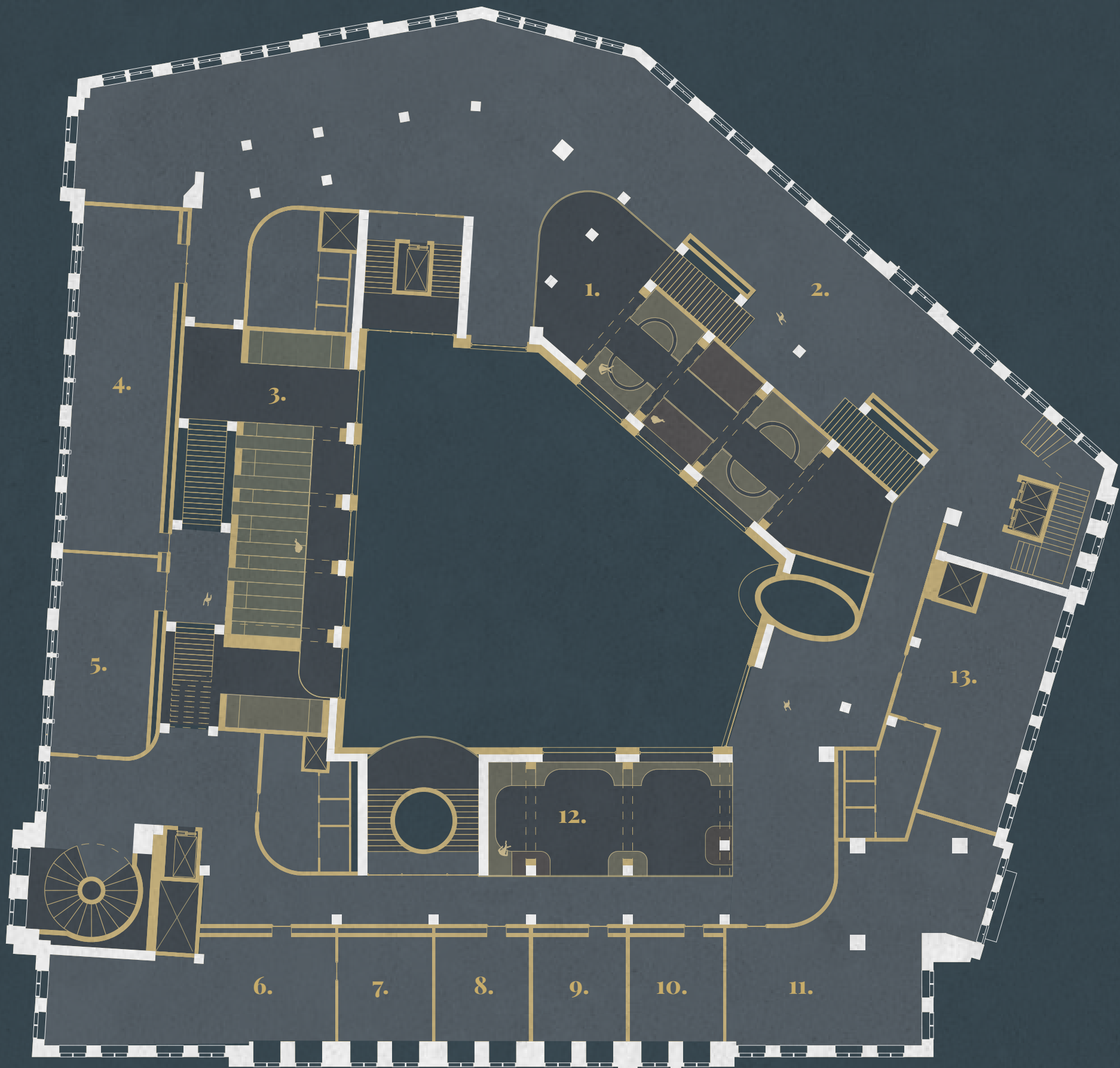


-01. Basement

- 1. Entrance Tunnel*
- 2. Courtyard*
- 3. Lobby Wellnes*
- 4. Dressing Rooms*
- 5. Showers*
- 6. Main Pool*
- 7. Whirlpool*
- 8./9. Sauna*
- 10./17./19. Technical*
- 11. Logistics Kitchen*
- 12. Dressing Rooms*
- 13. Semi commerical kitchen*
- 14. Dry storage*
- 15. Wet storage*
- 16. Comunity/Workshop kitchen*
- 18. Childrens Daycare*
- 19. Public Bathrooms (with shower)*
- 20. Quick Entrance to the roof*







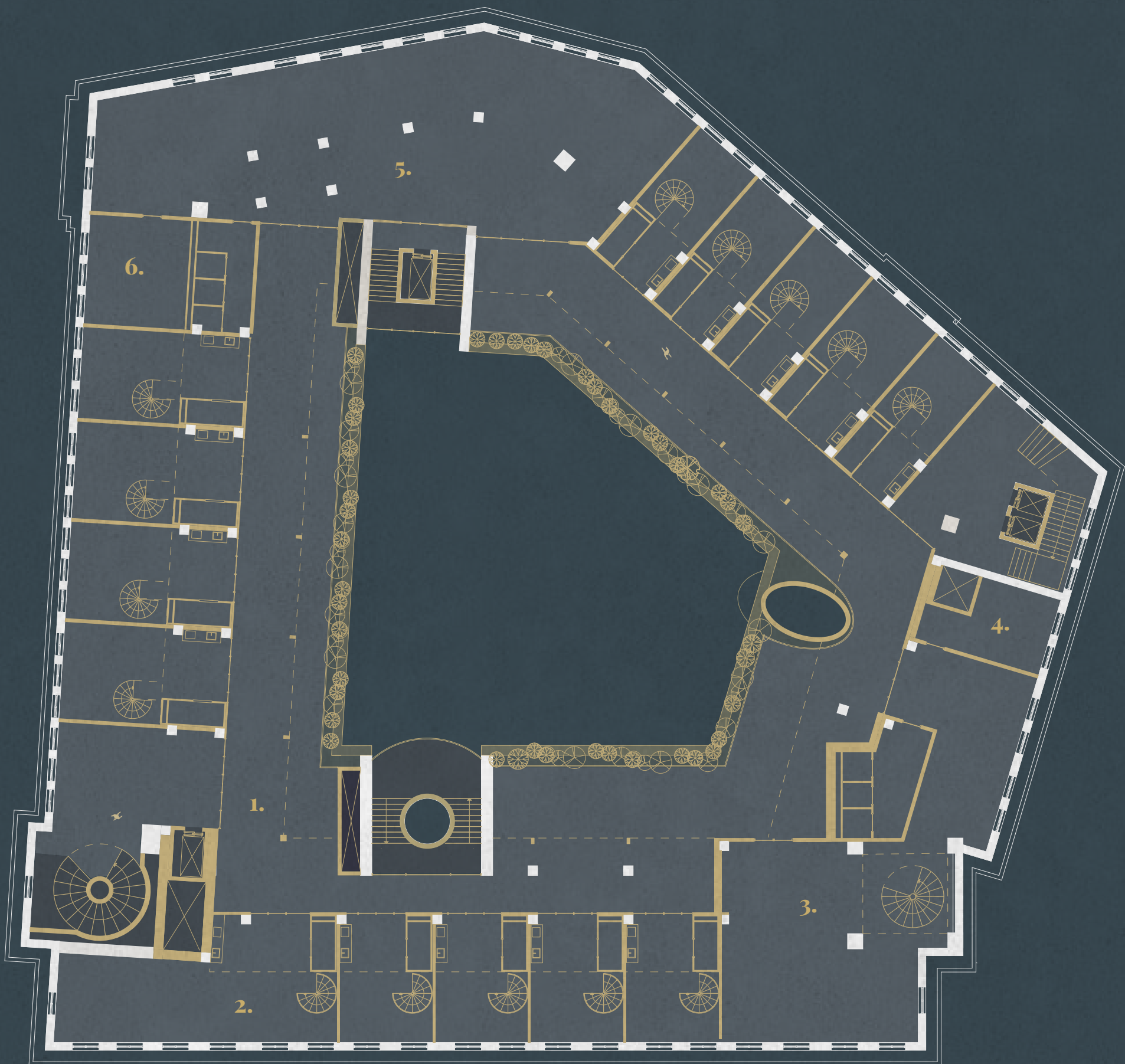
03. Floor

- 1. Study hall*
- 2. Library*
- 3. Performance hall*
- 4. Rehearsal studio*
- 5. Music room*
- 6. Meditation studio*
- 7. Doctors office*
- 8./9. Mental Health counseling*
- 10. Dietitian*
- 11. Fitness center*
- 12. Health lounge*
- 13. Dressing rooms*





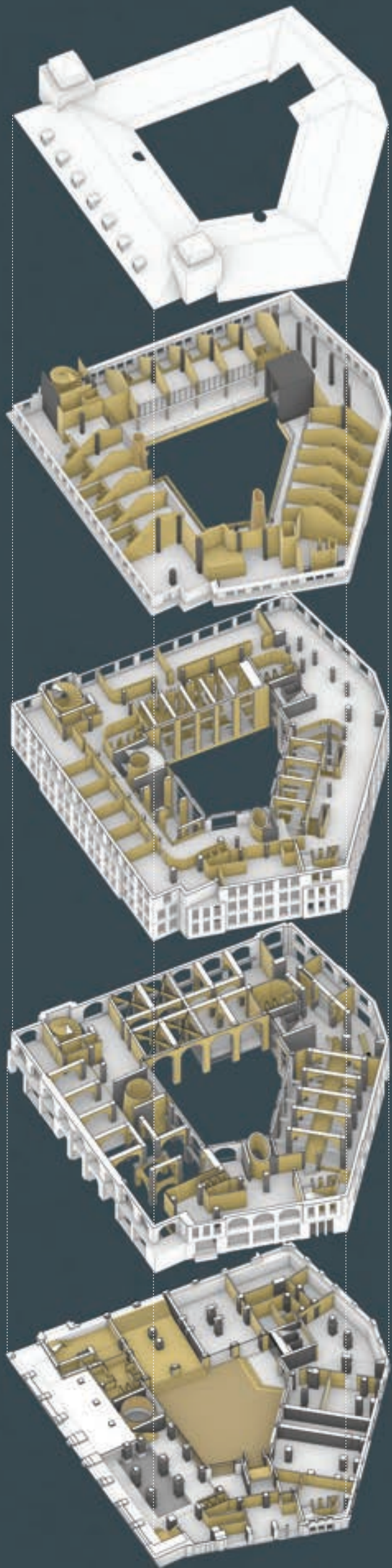


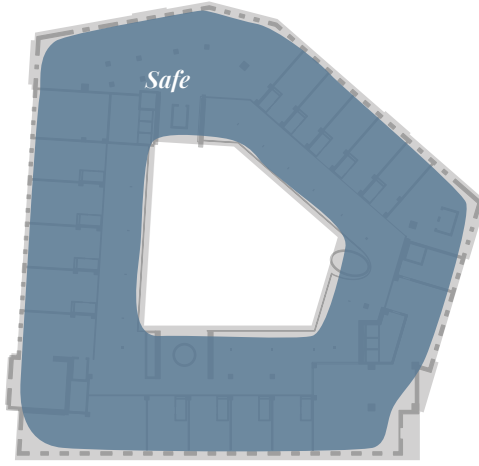


05. Floor

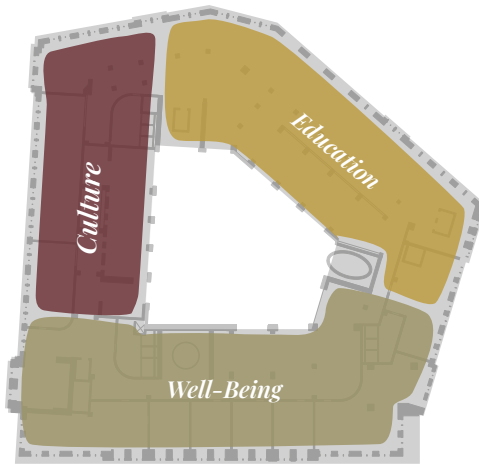
1. *Semi private gardens*
2. *Artis in Residence Maisonette*
3. *South Art Gallery*
- 4./6. *Storage*
5. *North Art Gallery*



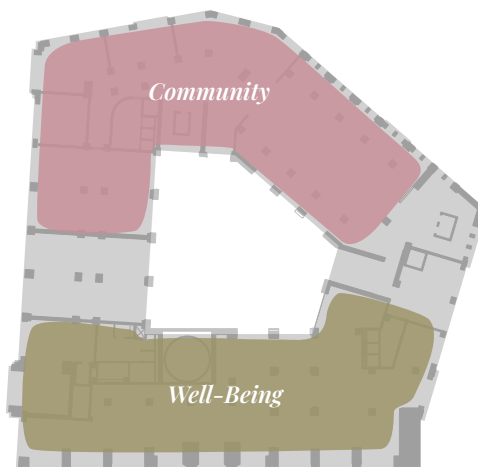




Floors
05 - 06



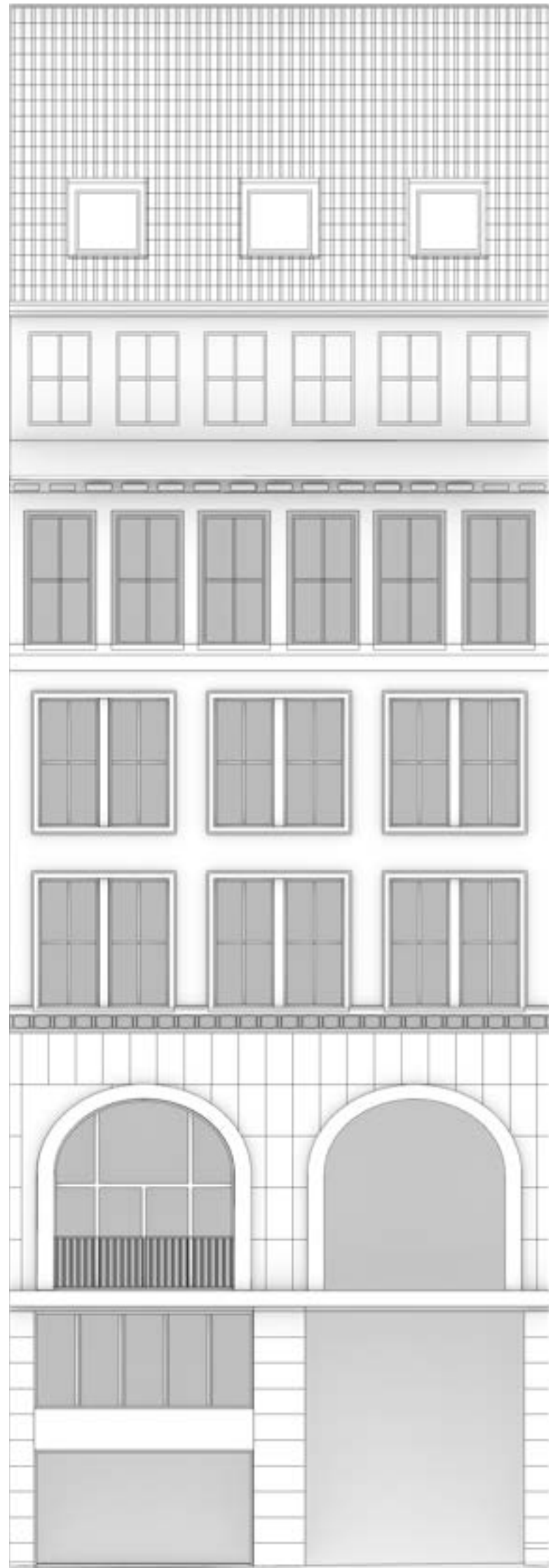
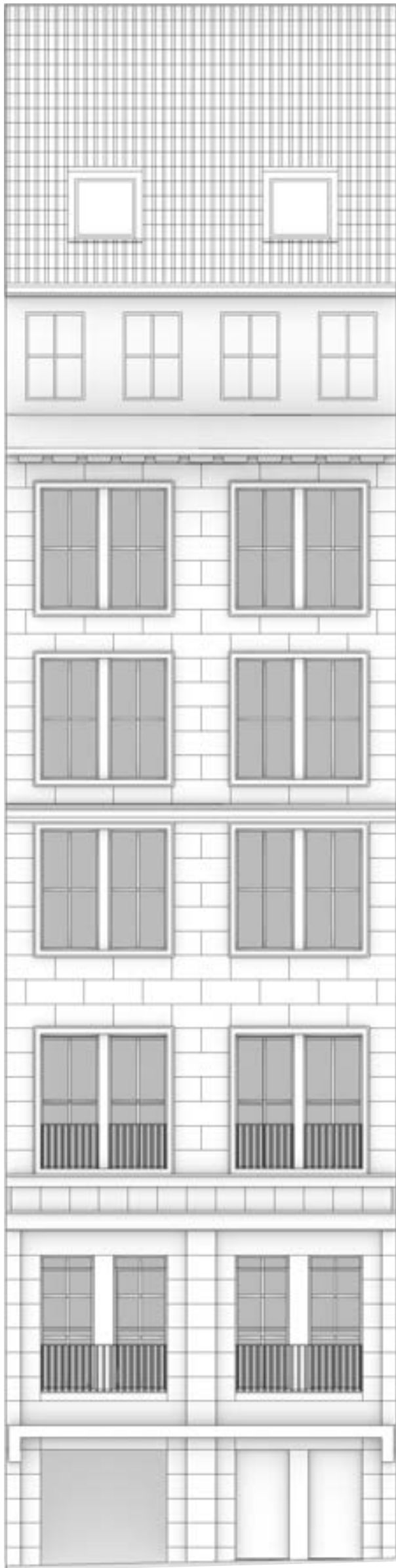
Floors
02 - 04

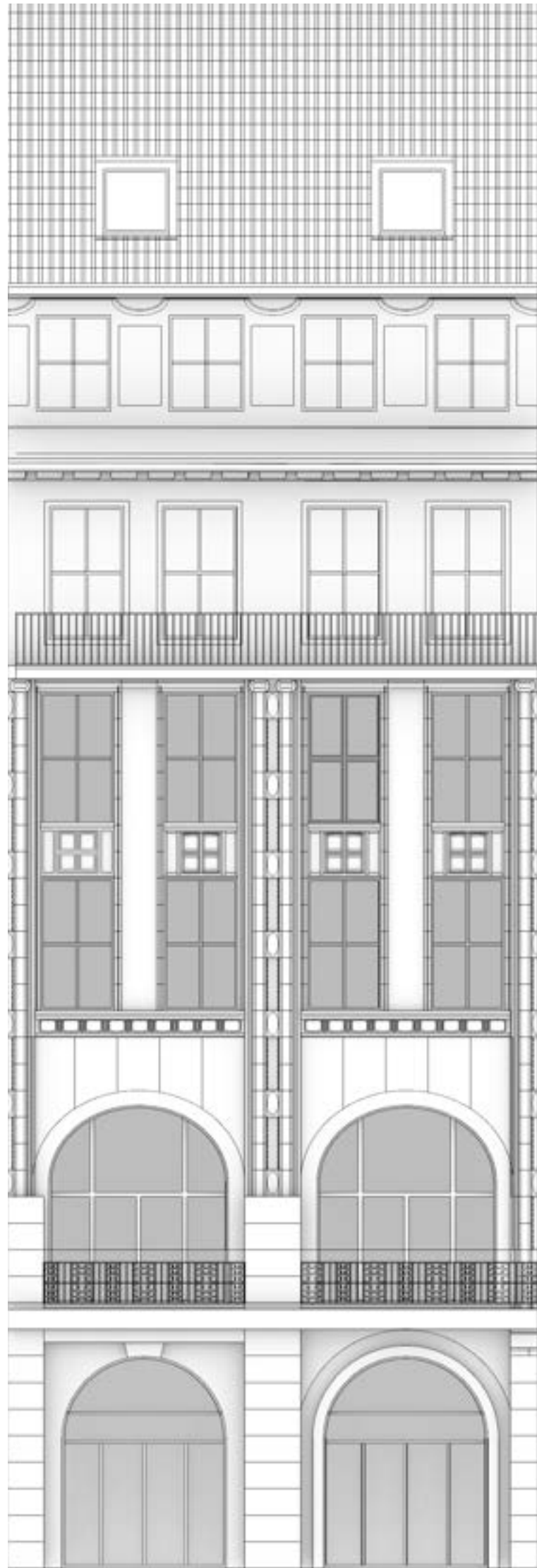


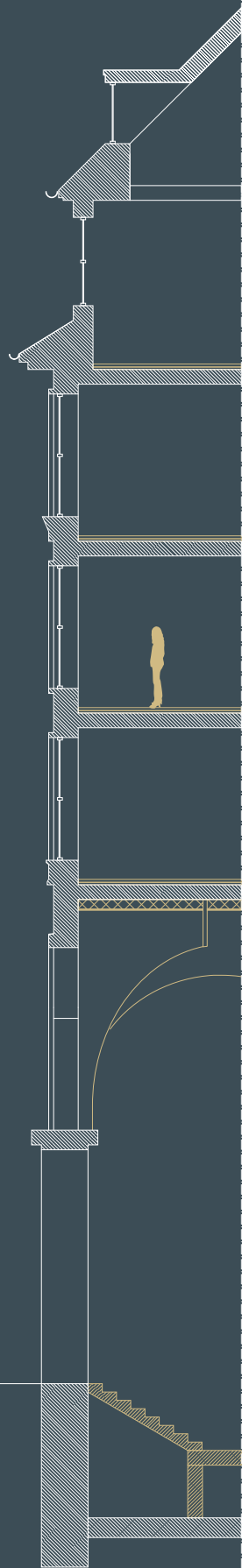
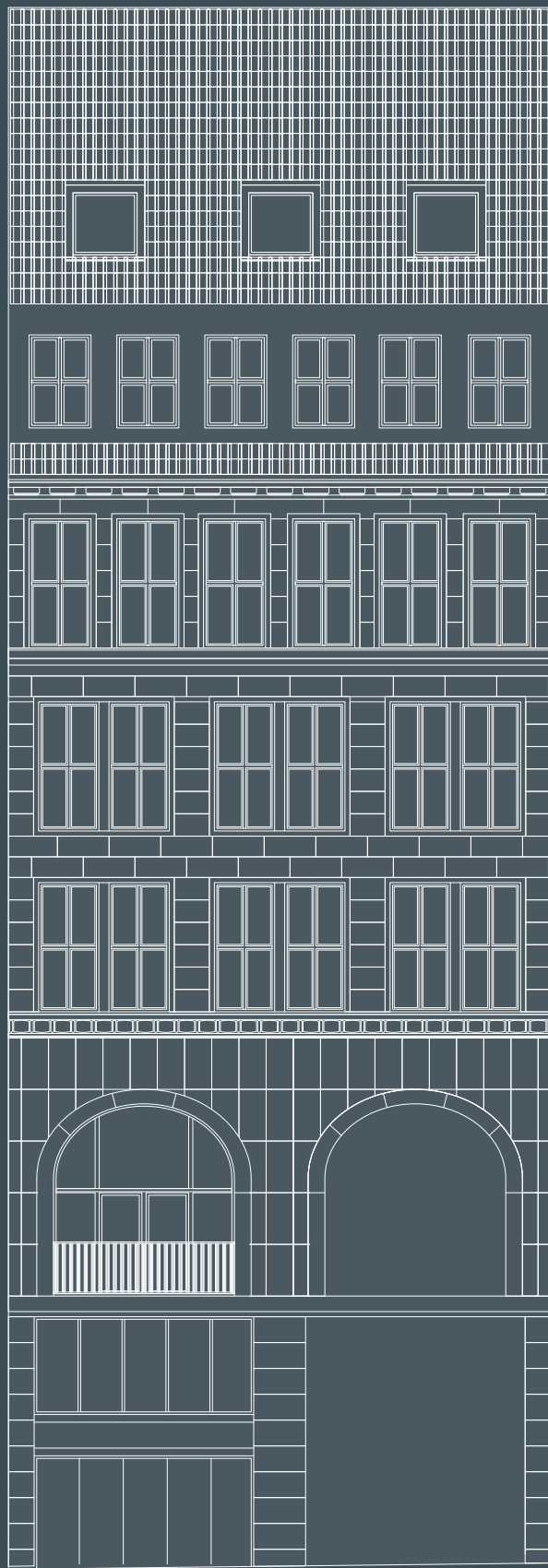
Floors
-01 - 01

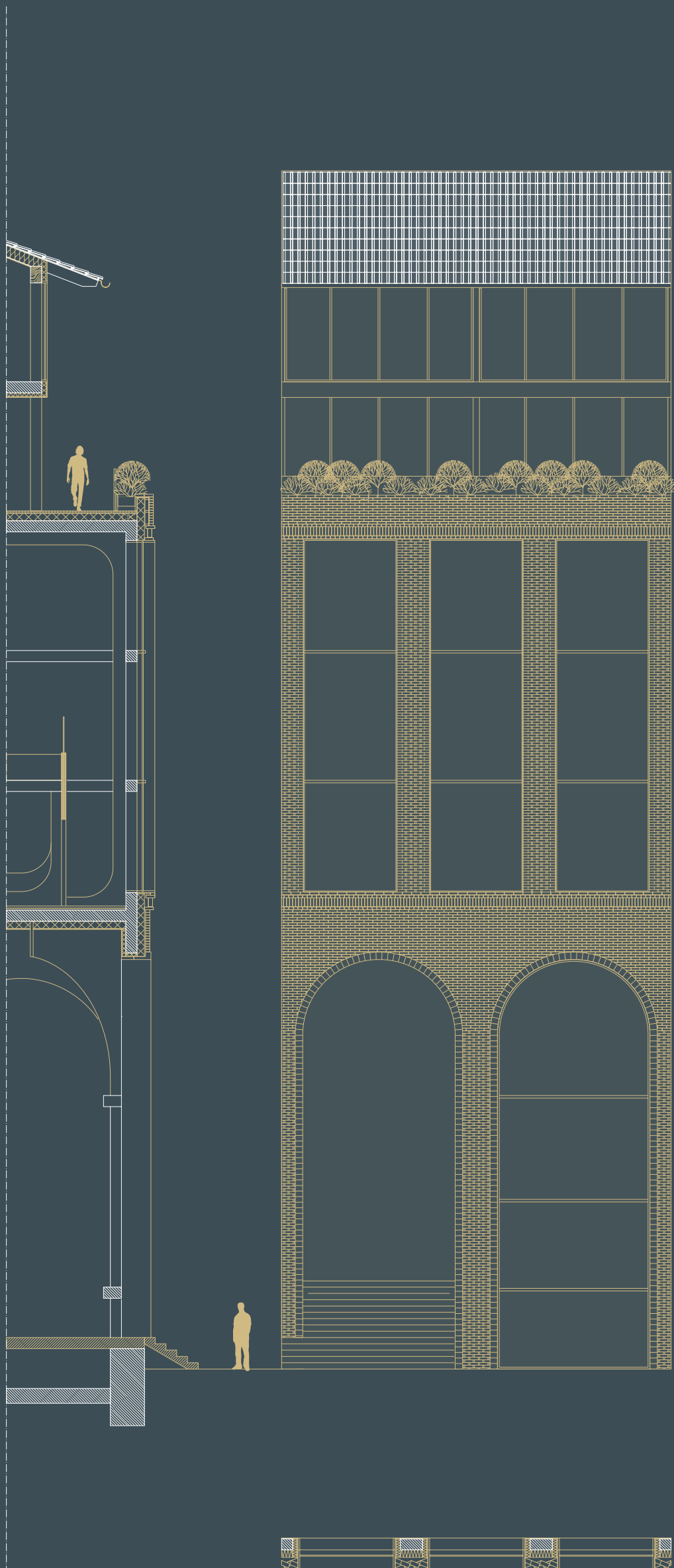






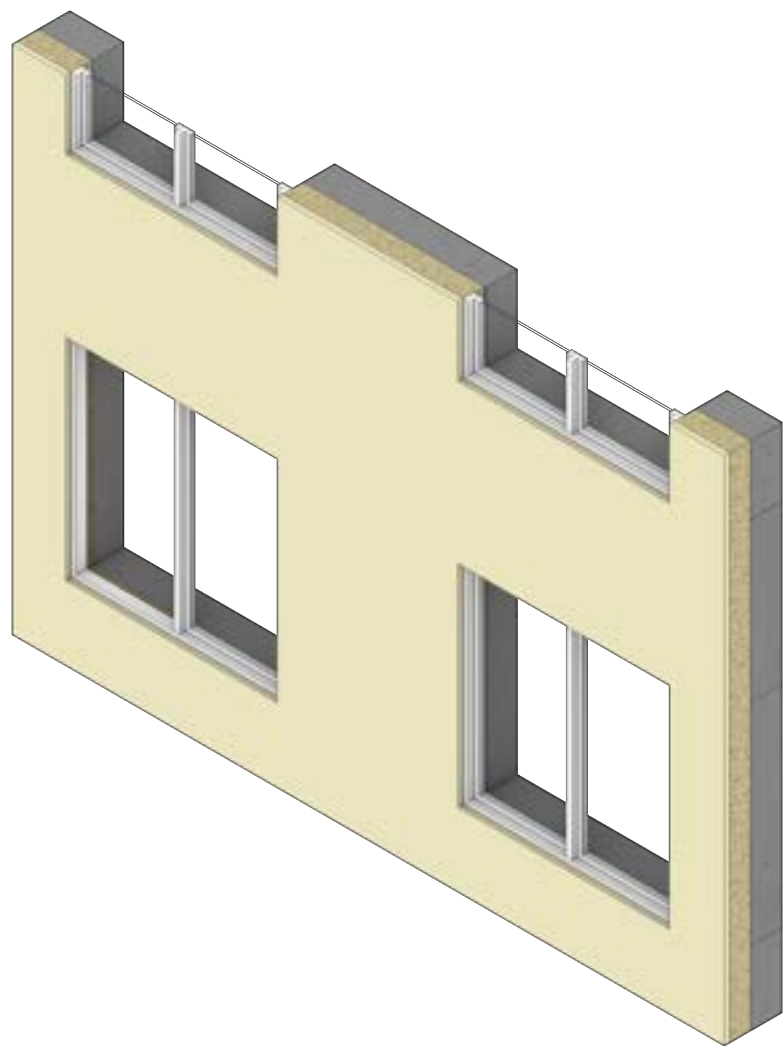






Facade Design

The new courtyard façade is relating to the outside façade by following through with the form and position of windows, but enlarging them. This leads to less emphasis on the façade, but rather on what is behind it. When standing on the second floor of one wing of the building, there is always a relation to the other sides of the building. Everything is spacious, filled with light, inviting and facilitates the people with an unhindered route through all corners of the building.

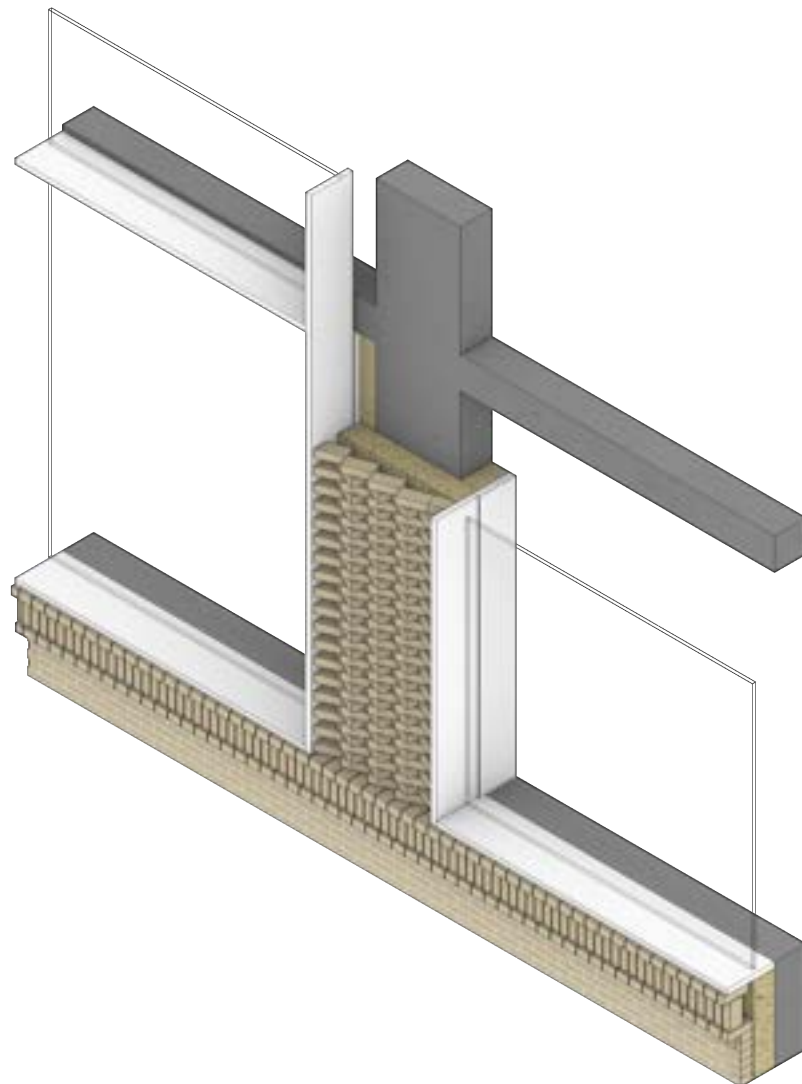


Facade material

For the material of the new courtyard facade, I chose reused brick. The Ruhrgebiet - and especially Essen - is home to the “Backstein-expressionismus” and filled with beautiful buildings built from brick. Therefore, there is a lot of native material to be found locally.

First, when I thought of a material I thought about the sustainability aspect of it, immediately going through all options available that are demountable. But this building is not supposed to be demounted ever again, so the sustainability for me is found its longevity.

To make it easier to reuse the material, it is stacked in a diagonal manner, also allowing biodiversity to flourish within the courtyard. In my opinion it is also quite literally about breaking with established traditions.









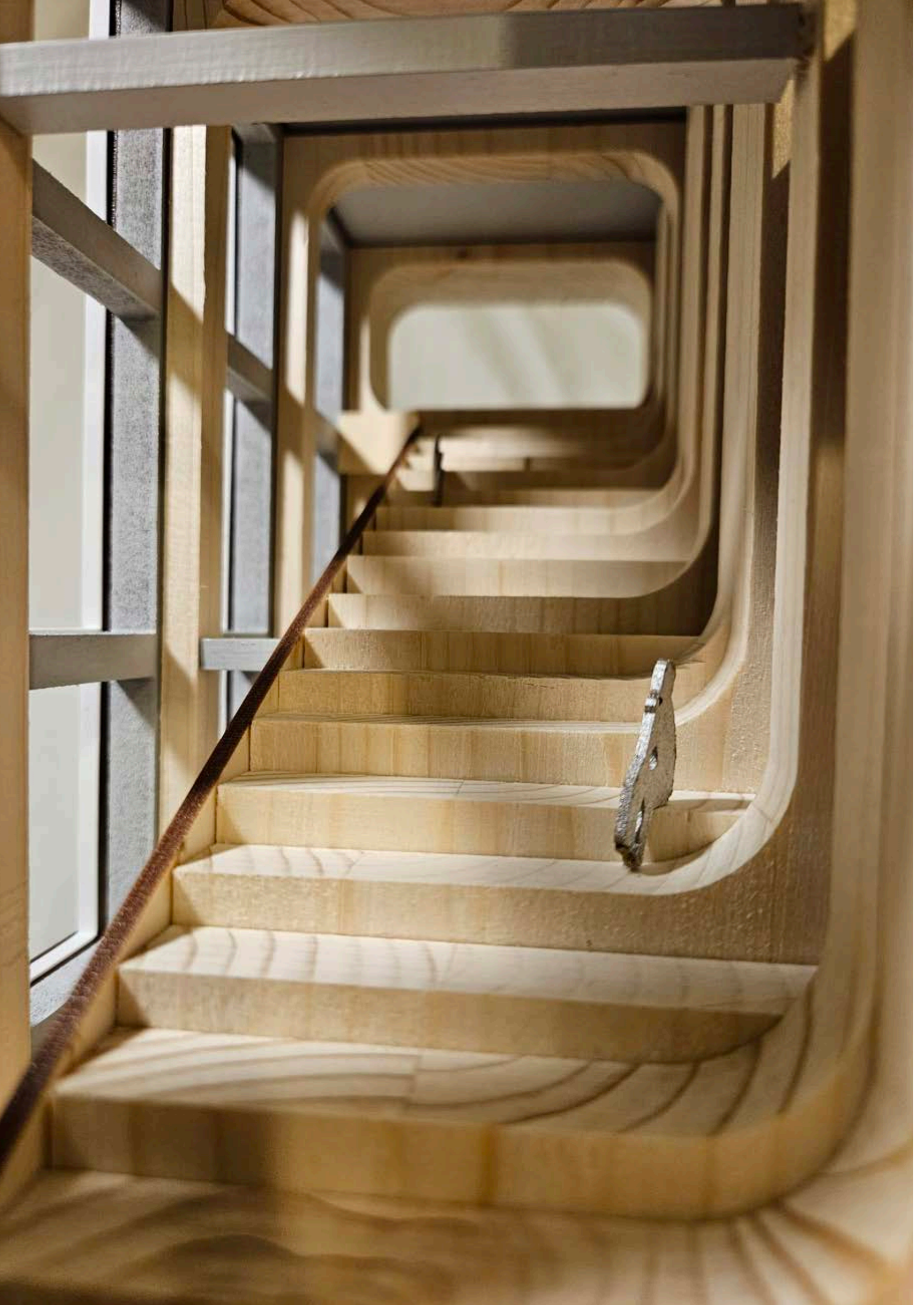




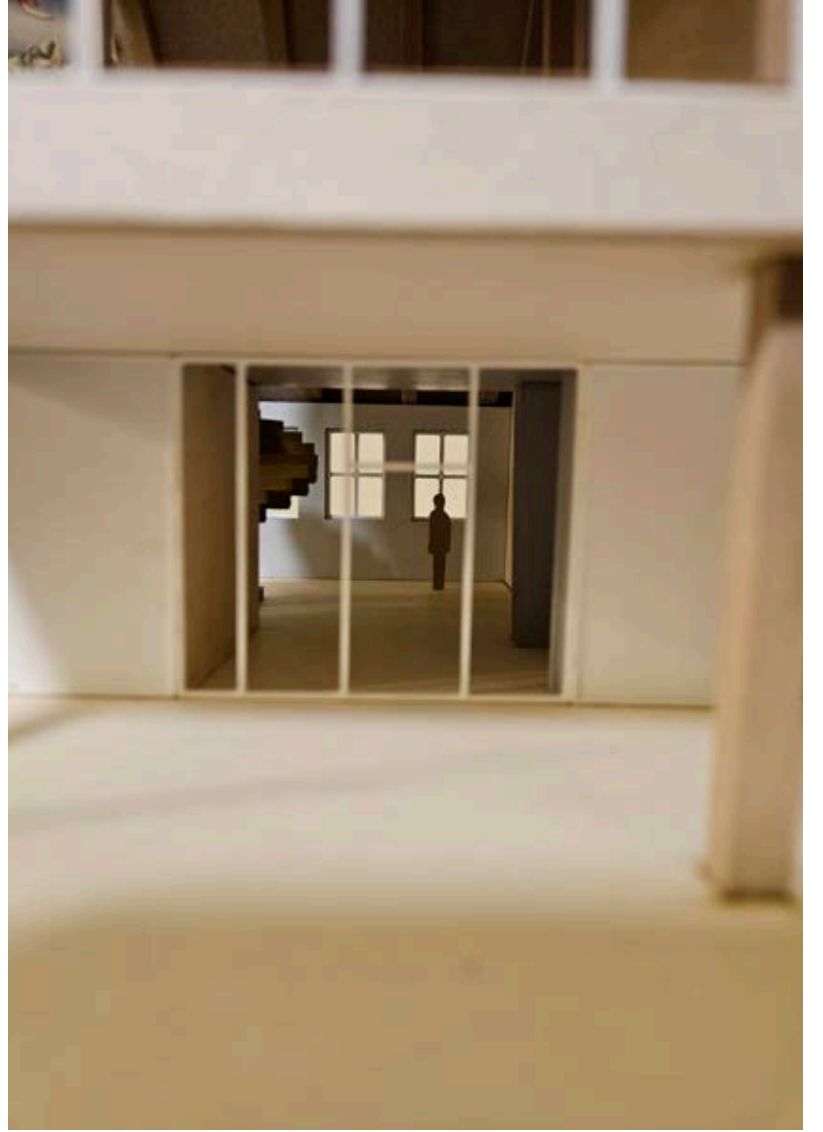


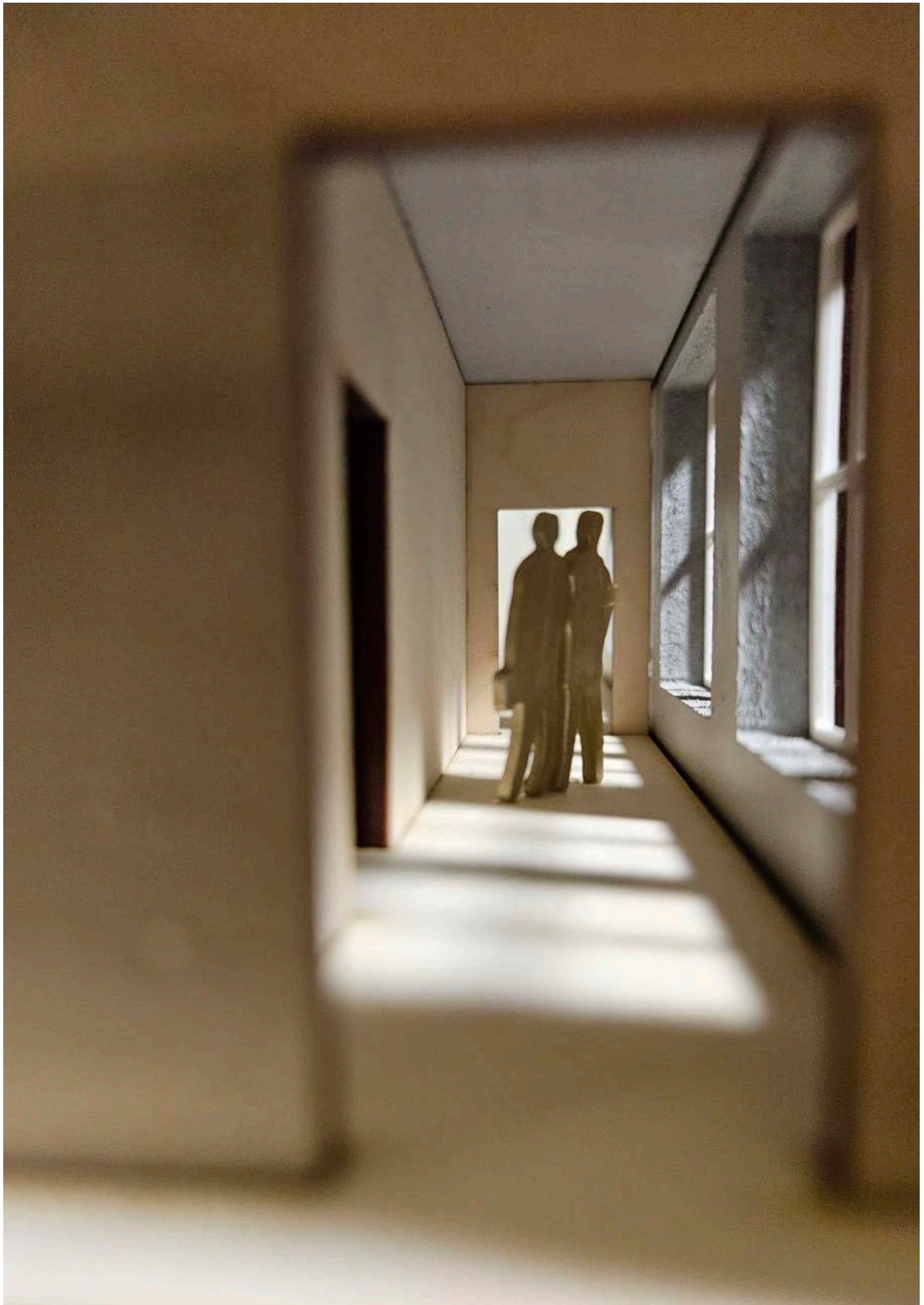


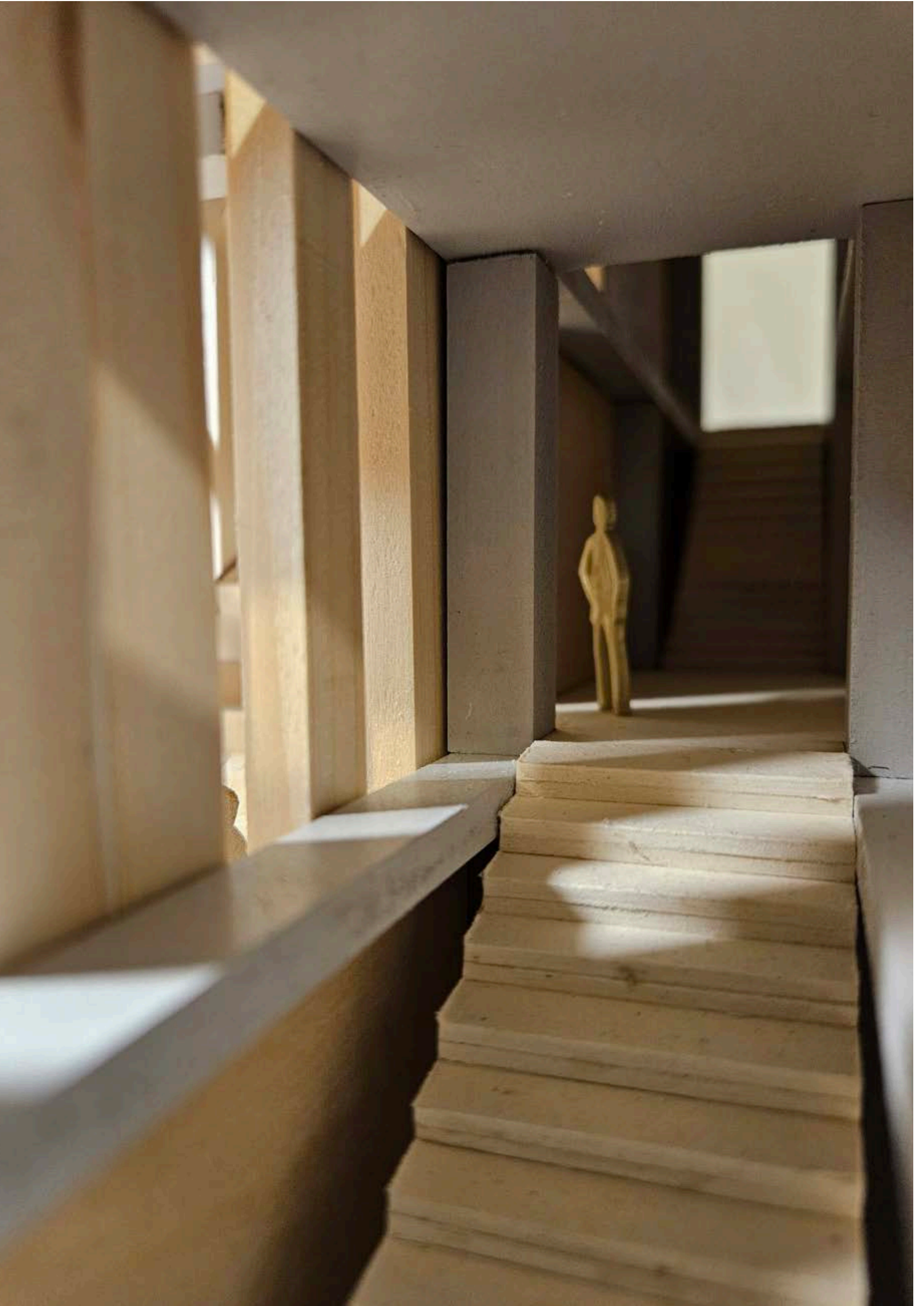












Reflection.

Architecture always has to be viewed in the context of its social time and culture. It is important to understand that these are closely tied together as architectural practice exists in a complex multiplicity of fields and is part of a system of interrelated economic, political, cultural, and ideological practices (Avermaete, 2018). So, to explore the possibilities of new creative ways to give form to architectural designs, it is necessary to also imagine what kind of social, political, and cultural context these creations can take shape in. Architecture always relies on socioeconomics, because a socioeconomic framework is needed to facilitate the funding for planning and construction.

“We have to realize that we have caused a collective problem, that requires a collective approach and solution. This is the role of the government, it has to do what is necessary, not possible. [...] It has to show leadership, that’s what it is about. Because with it lies the responsibility to protect the ability to be.” (Rau, 2020).. For the necessary changes that we need to make, the government must take back its responsibility over the market and introduce a wealth tax that can help fund significant improvements in the pub-

lic realm. Architects would then not have to answer to the profit driven market clientele, but would have a quality-based measure to evaluate design choices.

That measure fits well with the recent trend or shift within the architectural and planning profession. Architects are already asking themselves whether their job is not essentially supporting high CO₂ emissions and if stopping with building all for all would be the only reasonable consequence. However, we as creatives must not underestimate or neglect our capabilities to imagine and design a future for the better. The De-Growth or “Post-Growth” movement does exactly that. Seeing opportunities for creatives to think of how the world could work without the ambition for more economic growth and more being built. They see the post-growth perspective as an interdisciplinary and pragmatic search for radical alternatives focusing on what is achievable within existing structures. (Durrant, Lamker, Rydin, 2023)

That radical approach is what this project might also be defined as; a radical but not unreasonable proposition that not only broadens the framework in which exist-

ing structures could become available for repurposing, but also explores alternative ways of designing and transforming while acknowledging architecture's role in shaping and manifesting societal values. It starts with a future framework, in which the city of Essen embraces the post-growth movement and implements a wealth tax, creating the required funding to buy back the hotel and give it back to all citizens of the city to use and enjoy.

We start looking at our existing structures in a different way. Seeing the potential that buildings hold for societal purpose instead of leaving them as fixed manifestations of the time and age they were built. "The New Public Luxury," encapsulates a vision that aims to address both societal inequality and environmental sustainability through architectural intervention. Focused on the city of Essen, Germany, a metropolis struggling with the environmental consequences of its industrial past, this project seeks to repurpose a symbol of private luxury into a beacon of public inclusivity. \

By reimagining the historic Handelshof building, this endeavor aspires to redefine the concept of luxury, shifting it from an exclusive privilege to a communal asset that fosters social cohesion and environmental consciousness. The project prompts a crucial question: How can privately owned buildings, rich in potential transition into public amenities? Through this research, the project envisions a world where existing structures contribute to the collective well-being as luxury public amenities. It represents an already happening shift in our profession and our social values and hopes to offer a new perspective to think about our built environment and that nothing is really set in stone.

Our buildings can change and so can we.

*Ich weiß, daß mir nichts angehört
Als der Gedanke, der ungestört
Aus meiner Seele will fließen,
Und jeder günstige Augenblick,
Den mich ein liebendes Geschick
Von Grund aus läßt genießen.*

- Goethe