

A Crypt within a Dystopia

Matthew D. Dreher

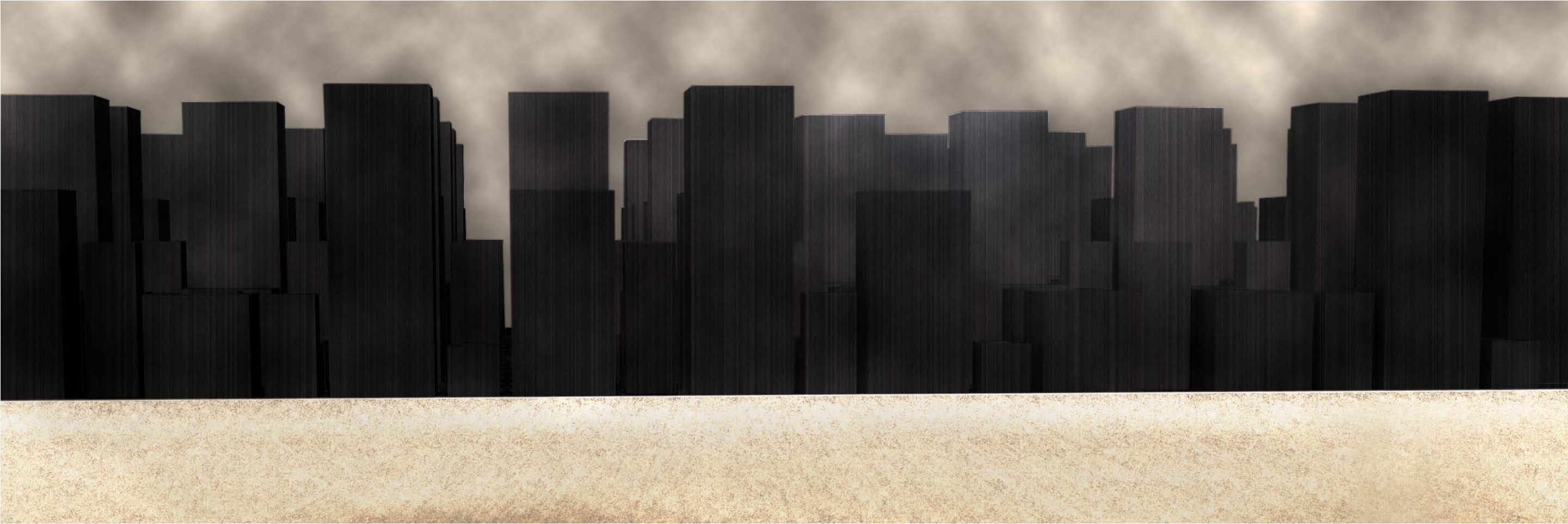
Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia
Polytechnic Institute and State University in
fulfillment of the degree of

Master of Architecture
in Architecture

H. Scott Gartner
Hans C. Rott
Elizabeth J. Grant

April 27, 2012
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords:
Dystopia, Crypt, Death, Rationalization



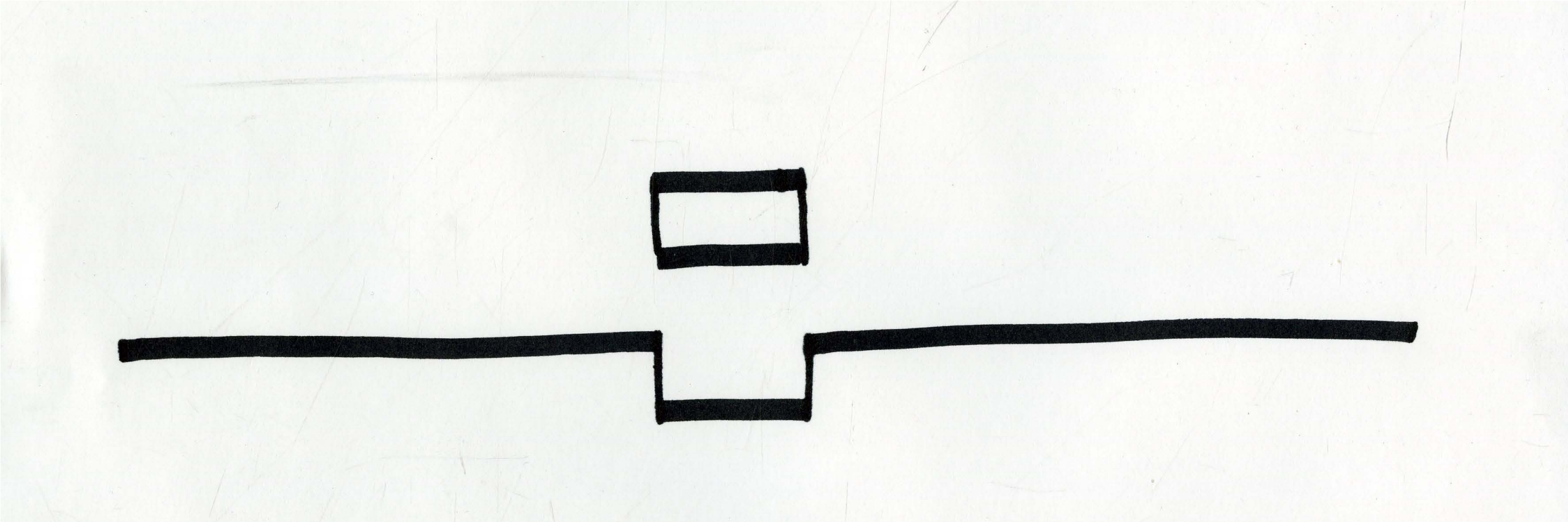
A Crypt within a Dystopia

Matthew D. Dreher

ABSTRACT

This project is about our social denial of death, the questioning of rationality and utopian ideals, and our fears of modernity.

The intimate connection once associated with death has been hidden. In this project the remains of the dead are sacred. Death is brought to the forefront. By acknowledging a finite existence and exposing our fear of death, life can be given meaning. The activities of daily life are integrally linked to the crypt.



Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
Preface	iv
The Dystopian City	1
Organization of the City	2
City Perspective No. 1	3
The Site	4
Site Plan & Site Section No. 1	5
Site Plan & Site Section No. 2	6
Temple & Crypt	7
Perspective No. 1	8
Plans, Sections, and Elevations	9
Ground Floor & Lower Floor	10
West Elevation	11
East Elevation	12
South Elevation (L) & North Elevation (R)	13
Longitudinal Section No. 1	14
Longitudinal Section No. 2	15
Transverse Sections	16
Martyr Cell Plan, Section, Elevation	17
Circulation for Burial	18
Circulation for the Living	19
Martyr Cell Perspective No. 1	20
Patron Cell Perspective No. 1	21
Water Tower	22
Partial Section & Elevations	23
Perspective No. 1	24
Perspective No. 2	25
Stair Pavilion Studies	26
Section & Elevation	27
Housing Door Studies	28
The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb	29
Dreams of an Urban Crypt	30
Plan, Sections, & Elevations Study No. 1	31
Plan, Sections, & Elevations Study No. 2	32
Charcoal Perspectives	33
Partial Plan & Elevation Study	34
References	35

As I began the academic year, I had looked to explore rainwater and architectural thickness, aspects that defined my previous three academic projects. Each sketch would dig into the earth and flood the ground. The word “gift” was written adjacent to several of my sketches. I had not envisioned a crypt, nor the dystopian city.

The project is not a negative reaction. Instead it is about a balance of darkness with light. The project is a counter to rationalized spirituality.

This urban crypt was developed without a site. The dystopia that surrounds this crypt was developed after a restless dream (p.30) that shifts the negative reactions normally associated with death away from the crypt. The crypt is a protagonist within the city. Further, the dystopia’s manifestation includes a critique on our self-imposed regulation of our humanity. We have allowed our humanity to suffer based on our perception of rational or pragmatic discourse. The treatment of the dead provides dignity to those that were not afforded so in life and demonstrates the essence of humanity.

.

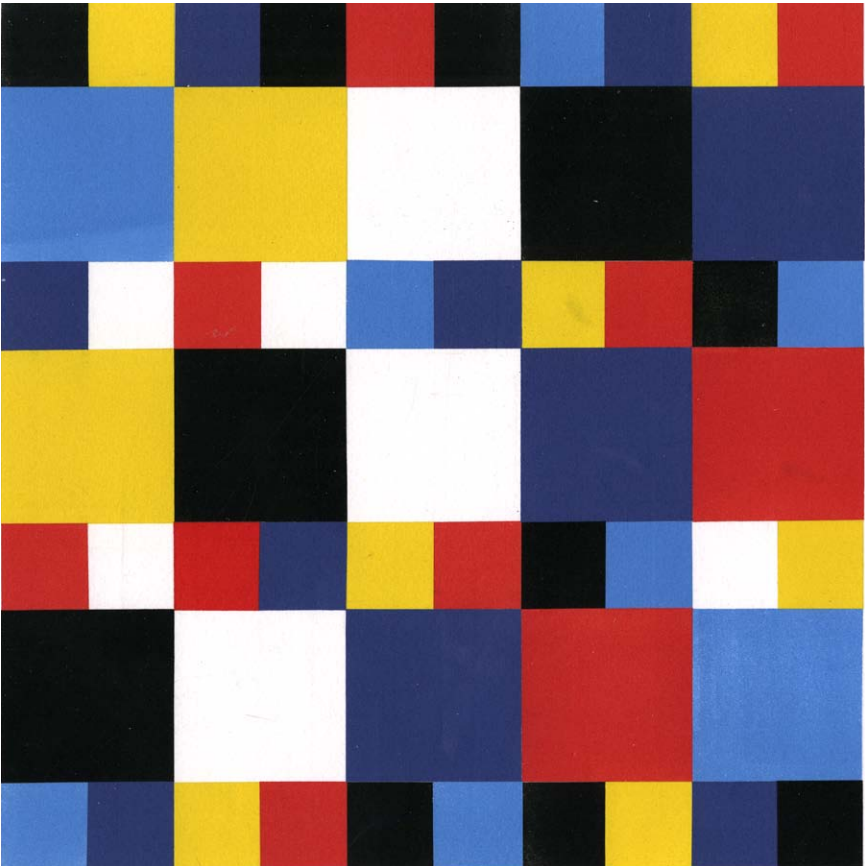
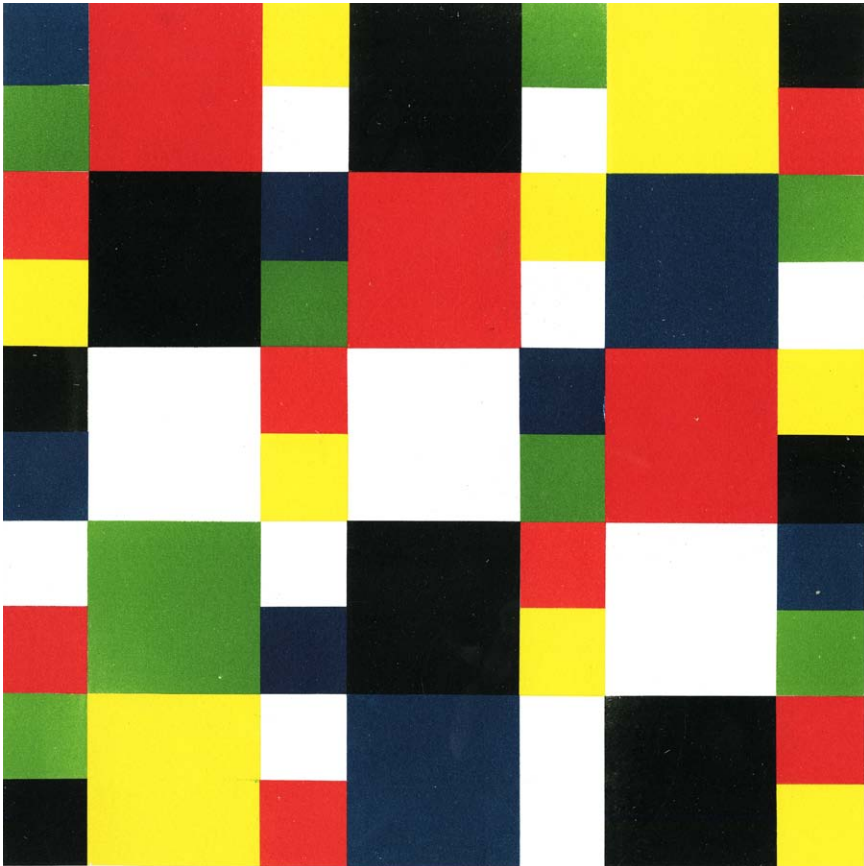
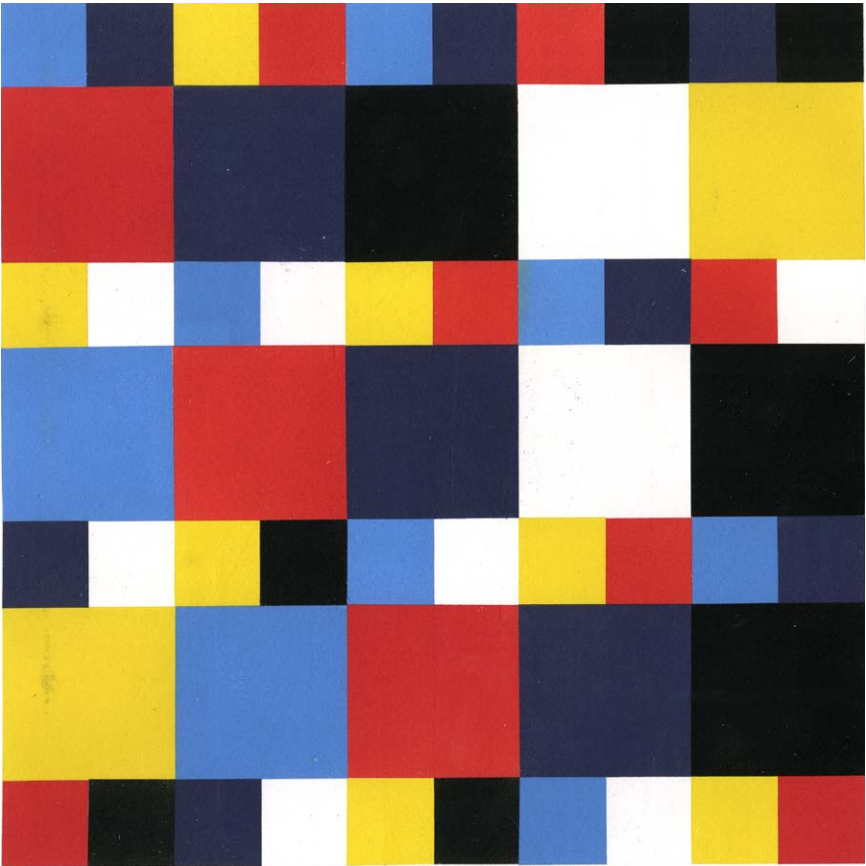
The Dystopian City

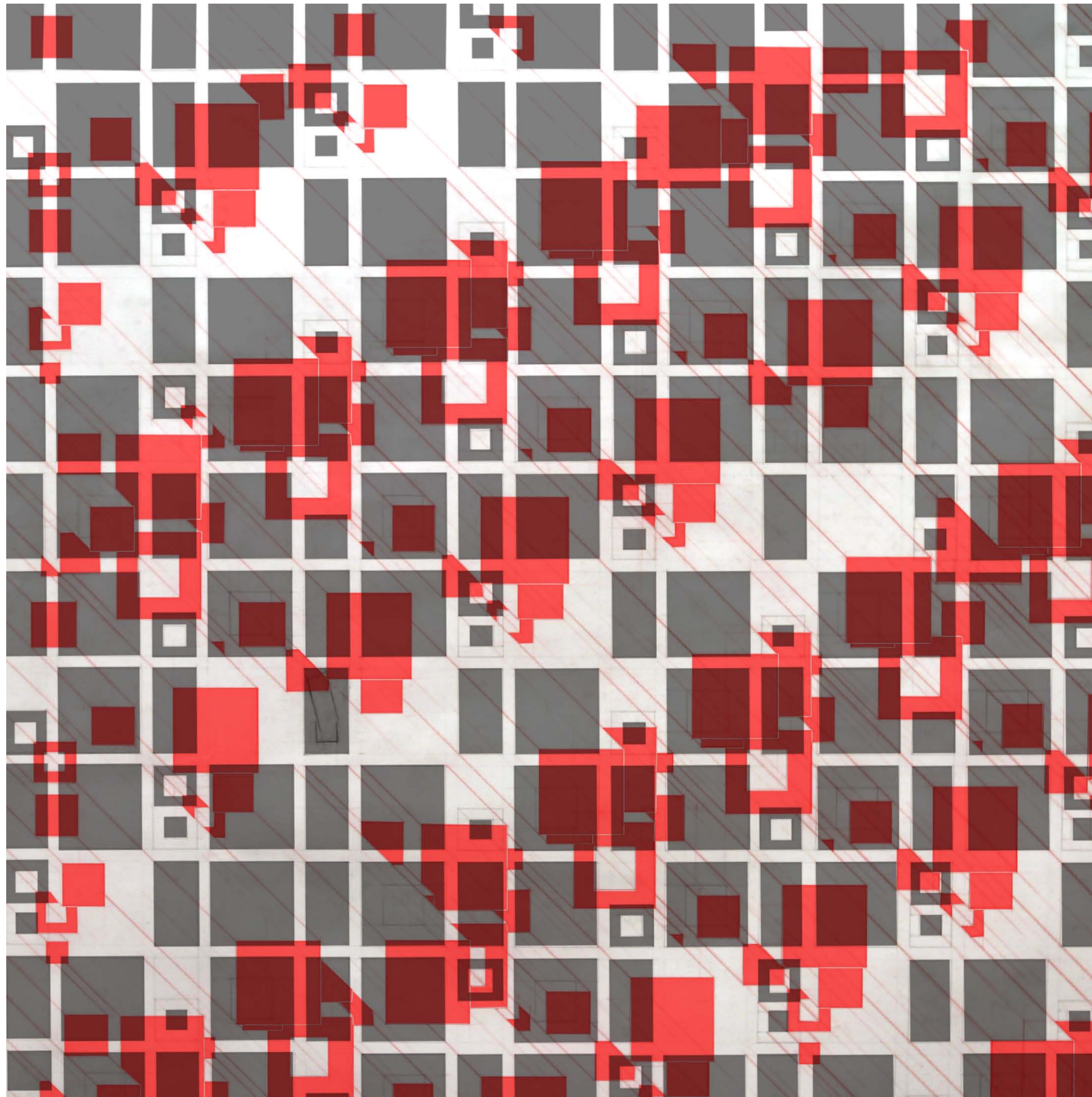
Welcome to Utopia!

The future has arrived!
Towers that can manufacture their own food,
provide clean air amidst the smog,
and purify water from polluted streams.
No more long commutes, no more poverty.
The towers are monuments to self-sufficiency.
Oh how grand a spectacle!
Towers of Modernity for a utopian world!

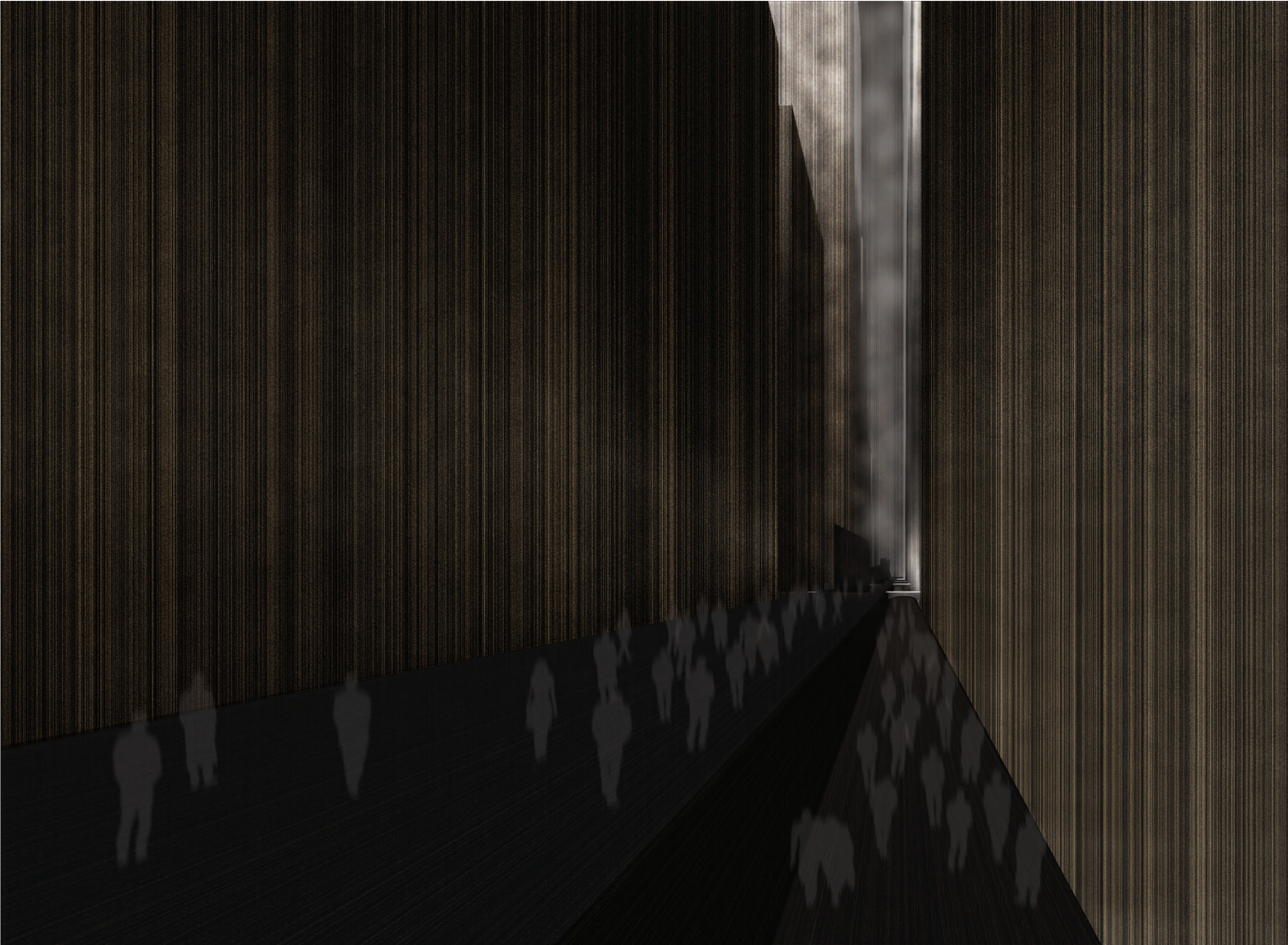
A Turn to Dystopia

The city has bowed to order.
The city no longer follows the earth,
the soil replaced with concrete.
Efficiency has replaced humanity
as order spawns chaos.
A forest of vertical concrete structures,
lost monuments to entropy.
An epoch of degeneration.
Without sunlight penetrating to the lowest levels,
there is no orientation,
and without landmarks, there are no directions.





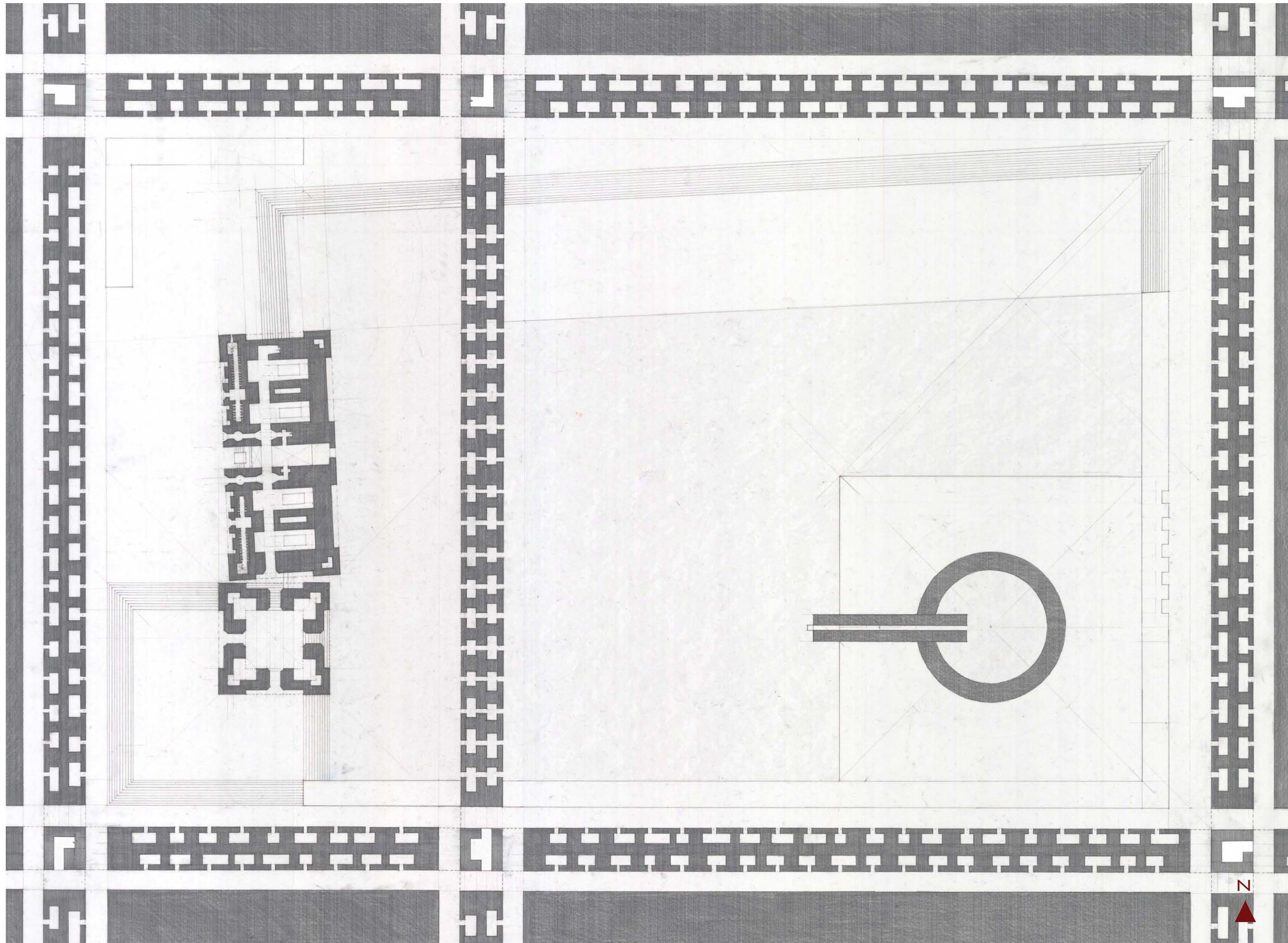
The human has become a resource.
A product that requires energy,
A product that requires installation,
A product that becomes obsolete.
Inefficiencies are discarded, vaporized, smoke.



Modernity fears death.
The dead are hidden in vapors,
undignified.

The City fears life.
The living are purged,
humanity into nothingness.

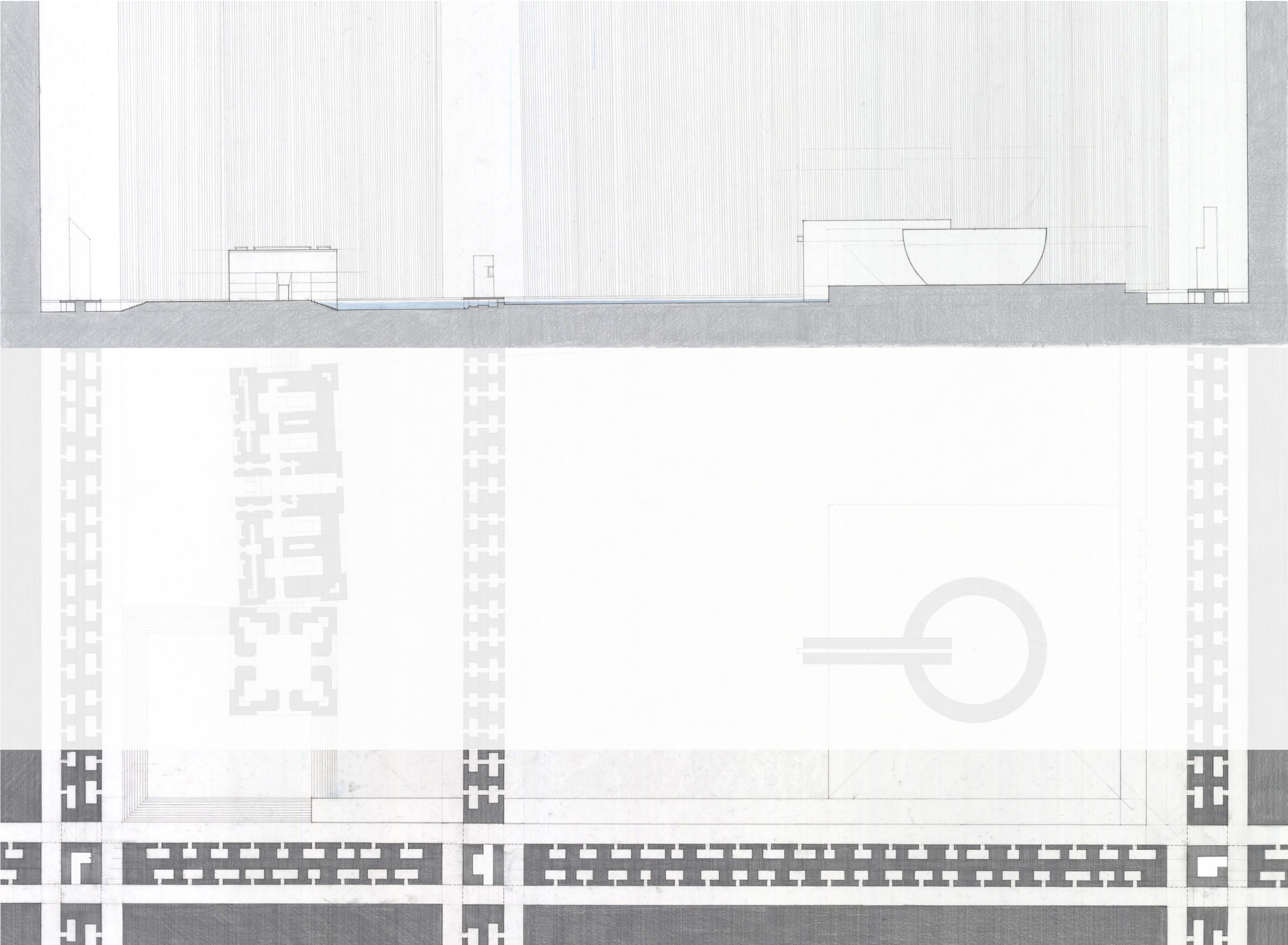
Death is sensed, not procedural.
Death is irrational.

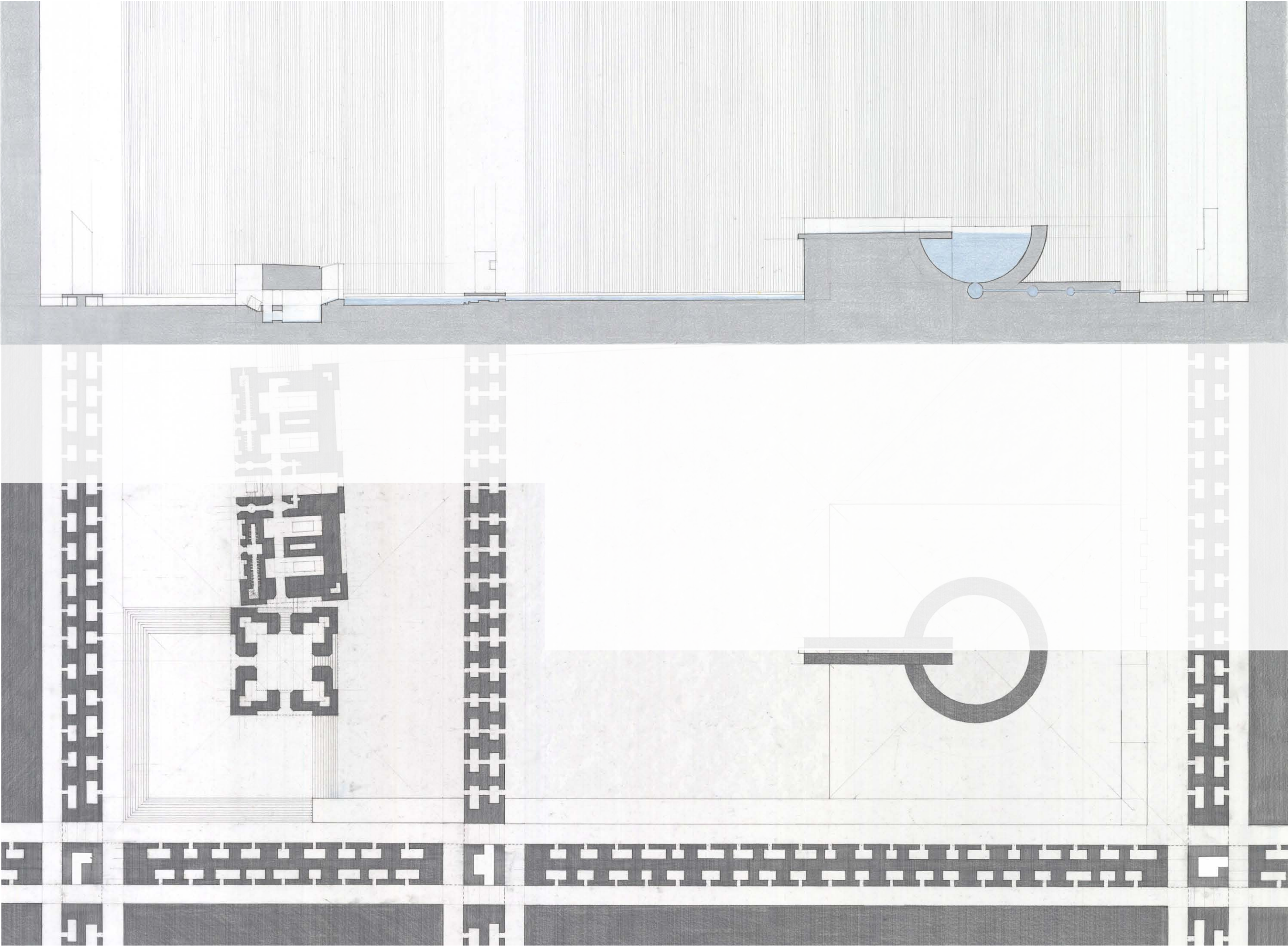


The Site

The site is divided into three primary components bound by raised streets, the Temple and Crypt, the Water Tower, and the Stair Pavilions. As the streets have become relics, the inhabitants have carved small homes from the concrete.

Between the Water Tower and the Temple and Crypt are two large reservoirs, relics of the city that once was. They retain additional rainwater for bathing and cleansing. Excess water from the Water Tower flows into these reservoirs before entering into the crypt. Within the crypt, this water returns to the soil - in a city where concrete has become ground.





The crypt is organized with four martyr cells incorporating the bodies of men. They built the Temple and Crypt. They broke the concrete that divided soil from soul.

These were men. They died exposed, upon the earth they released.

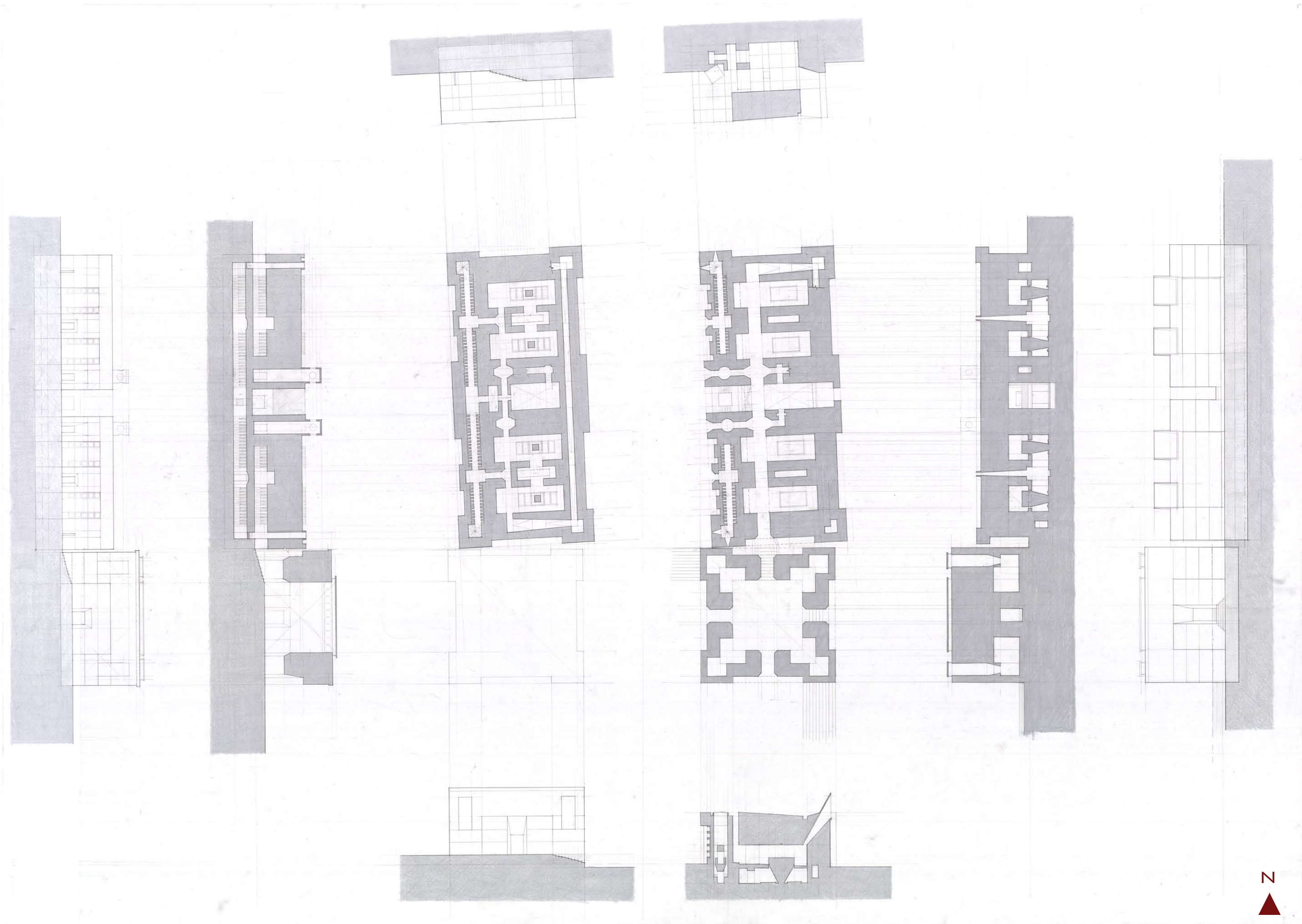
Patrons, who enabled the martyrs to build these places are also buried underneath each martyr. The interior of the west wall incorporates the ashes of those who were removed from the city's towers. The exterior façade contains twenty boxes for the ashes of the unknown. Forgotten in life, they are remembered in death. The crypt is a visual and physical reminder of death.

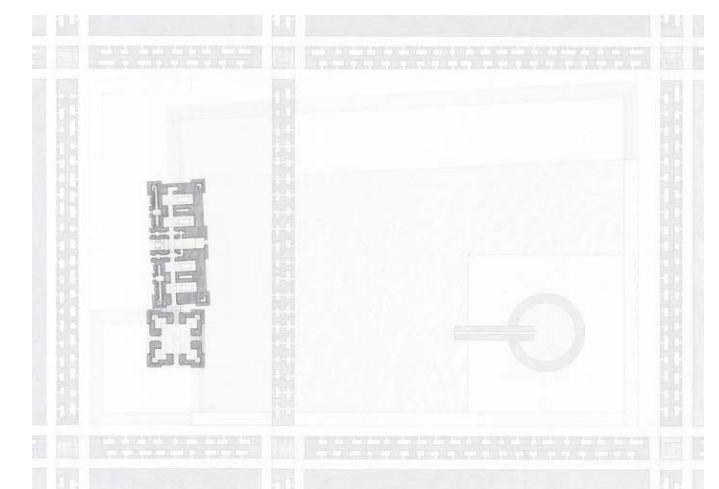
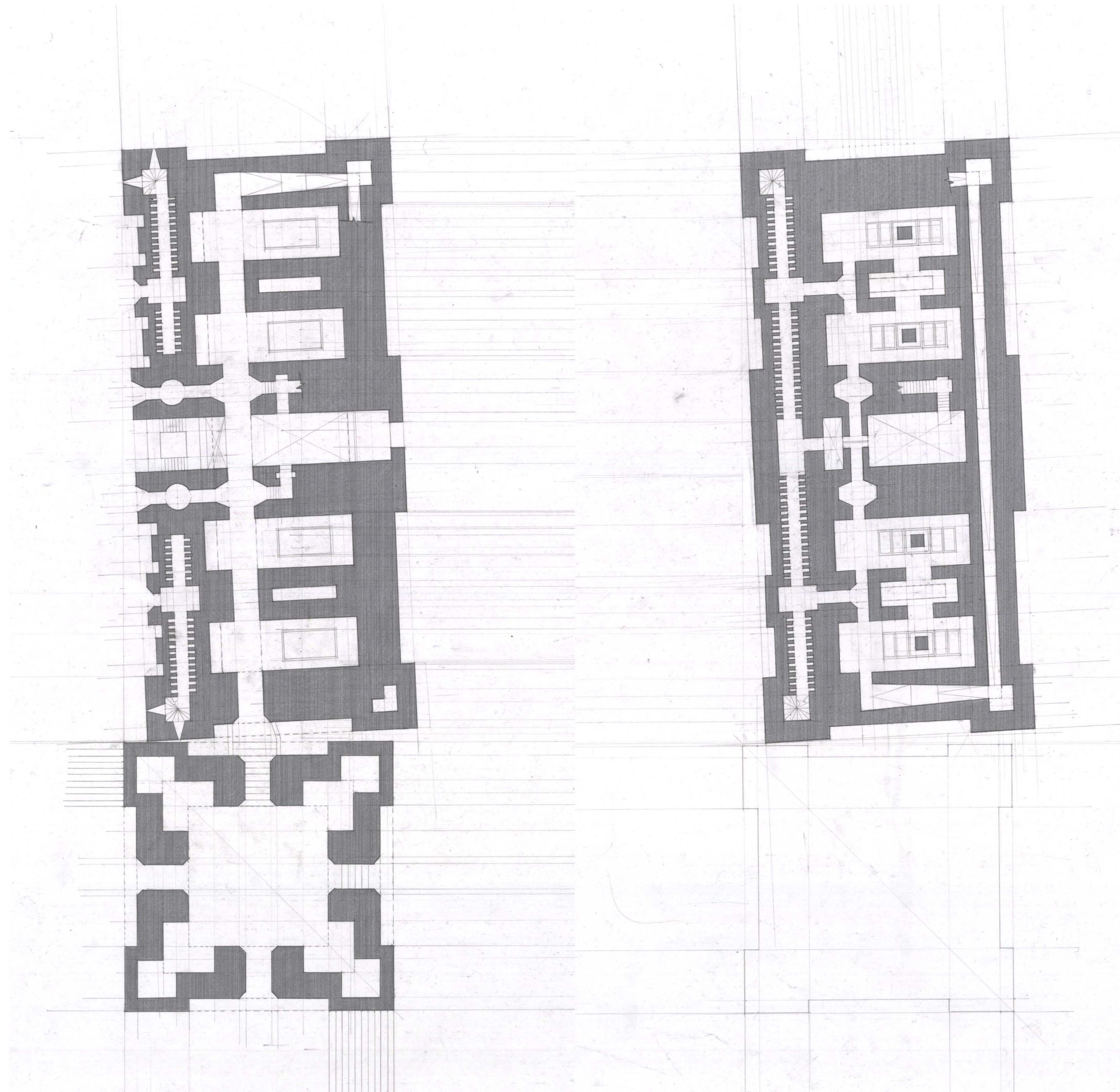
The temple is raised above the ground. This is a space for the living. A place of rituals, a place for irrationality in a rational environment.

Both these structures are connected, yet divided by a shift in the orthogonal organization. The equality of the grid is balanced by the hierarchy of spaces. The grid changes, indicating a change of atmosphere, a change of decorum, a change from dystopia. Democracy requires hierarchy.

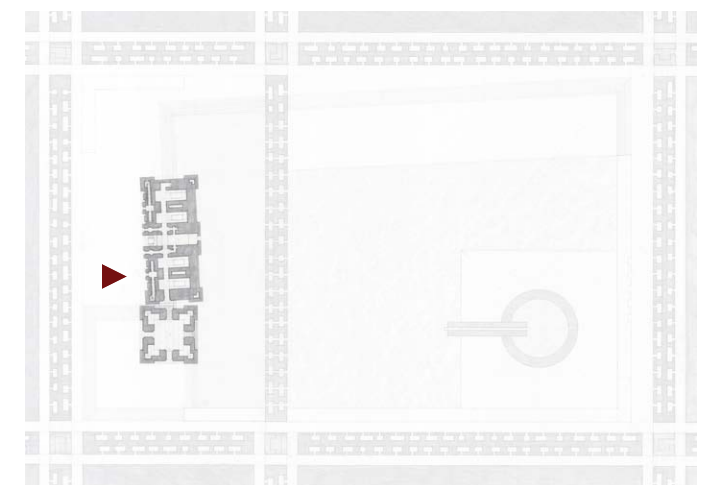
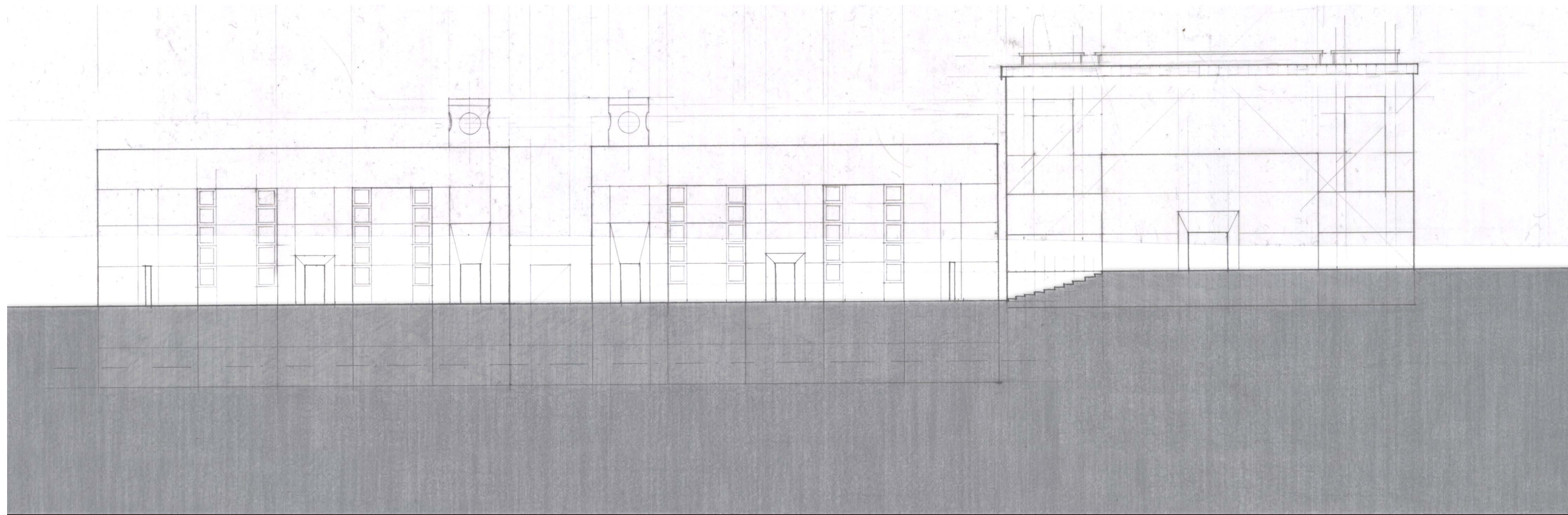


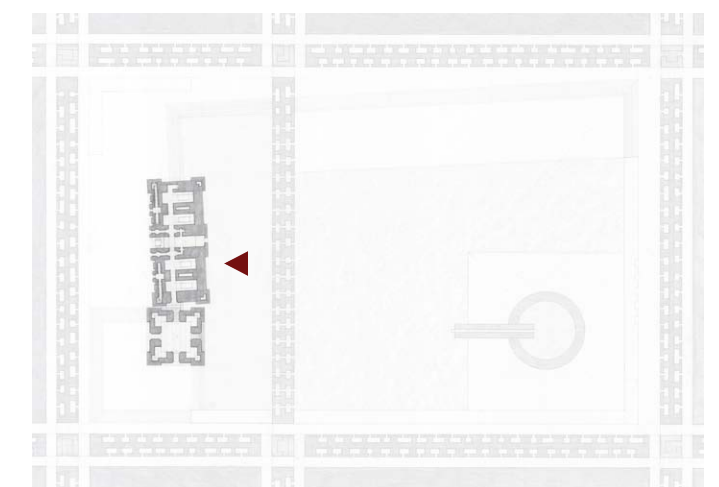
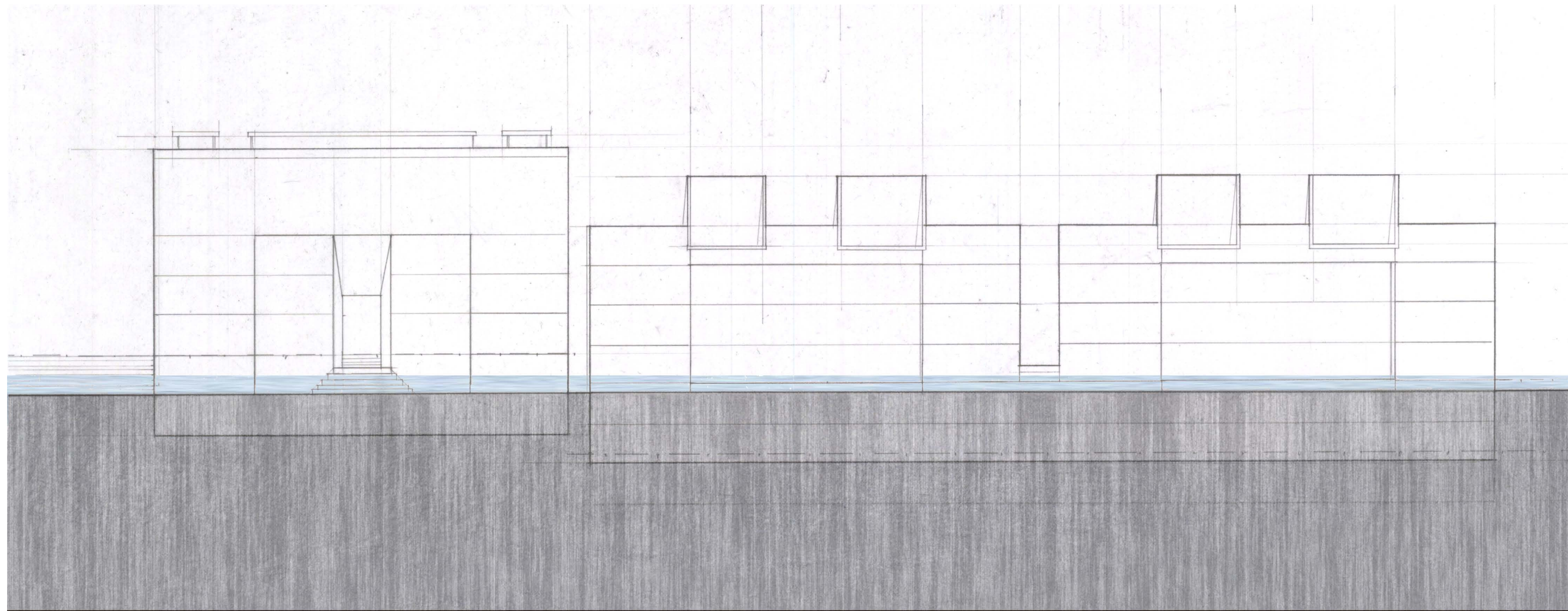


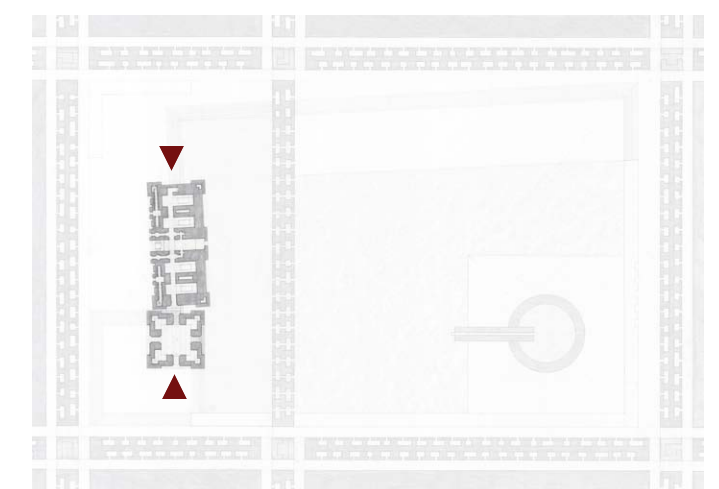
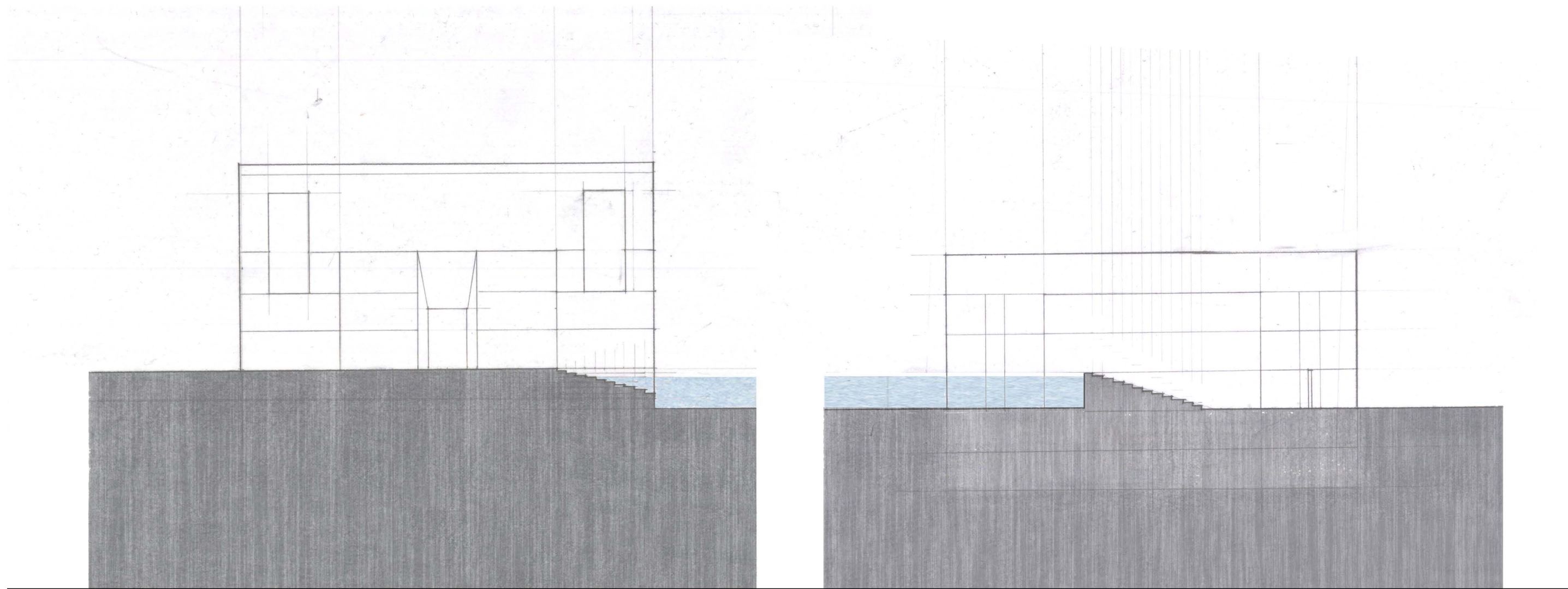




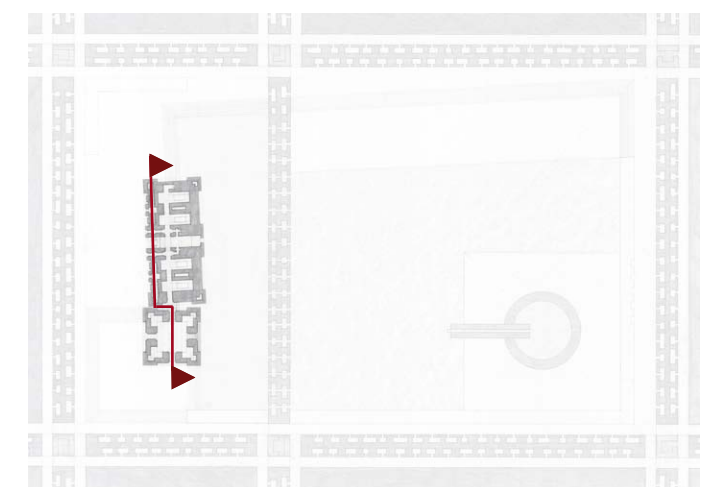
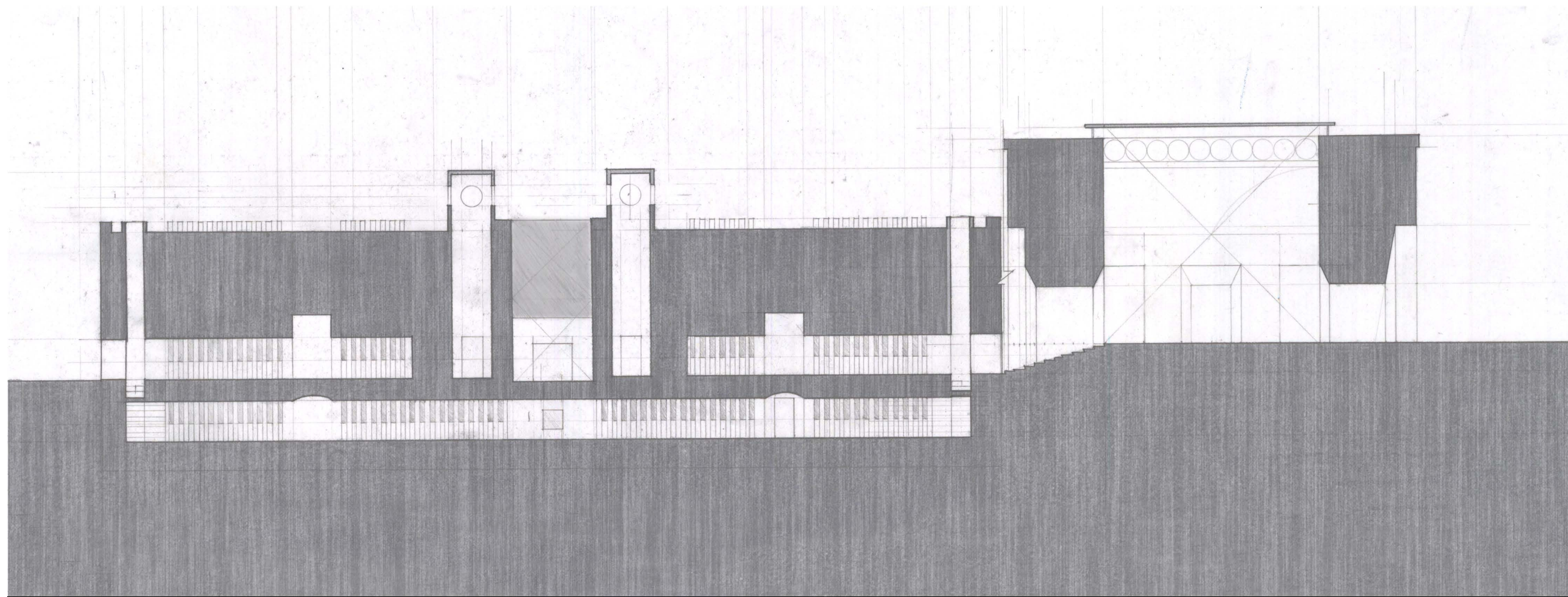
Ground Floor (L) & Lower Floor (R)

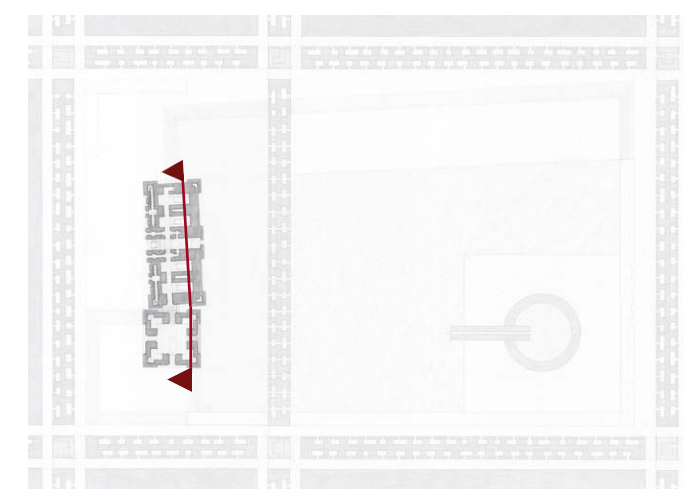
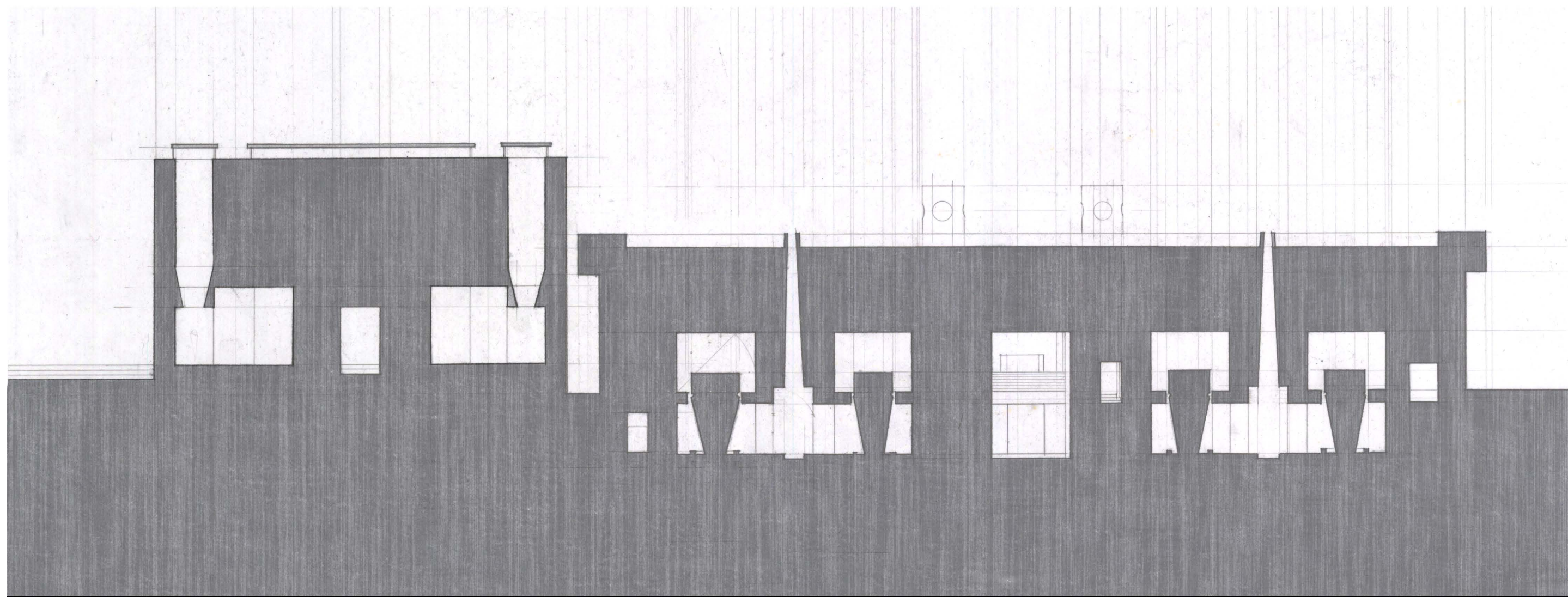


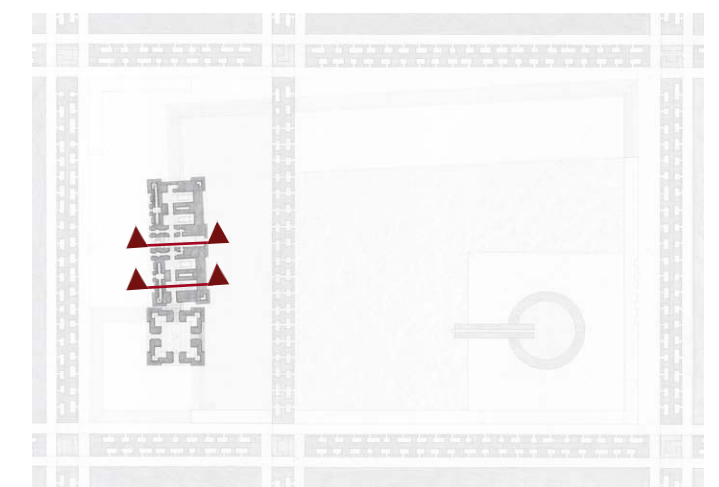
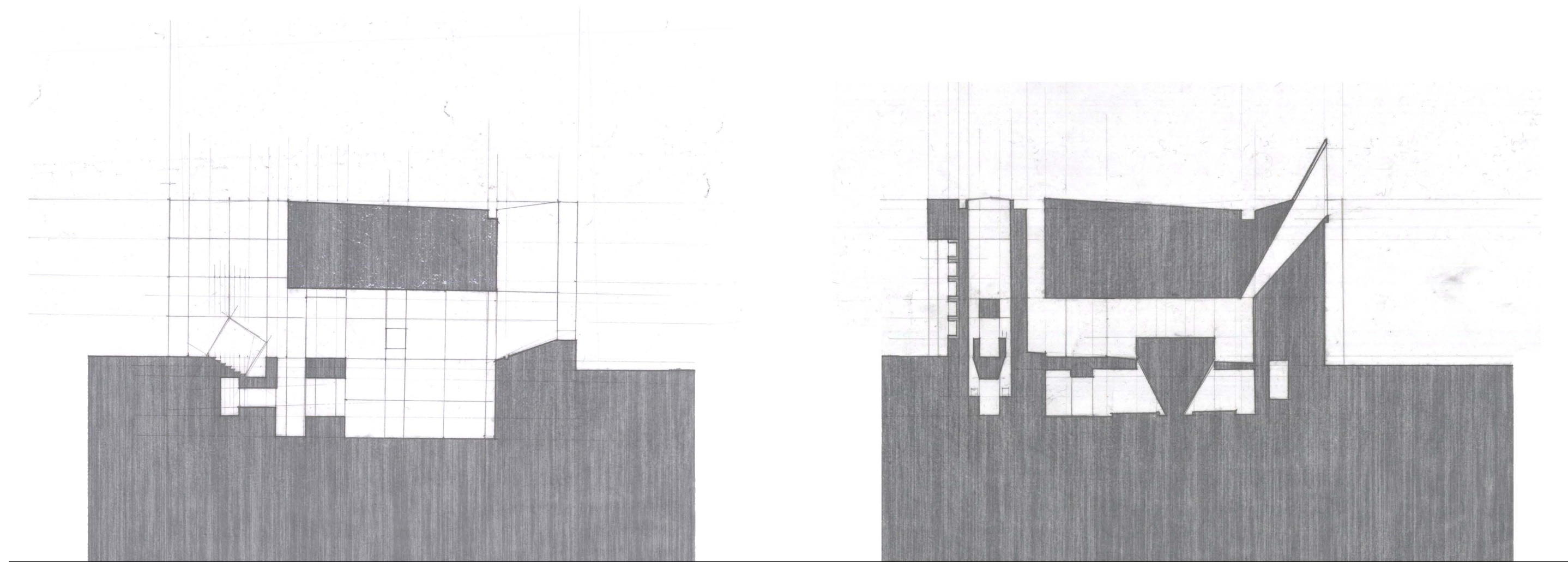


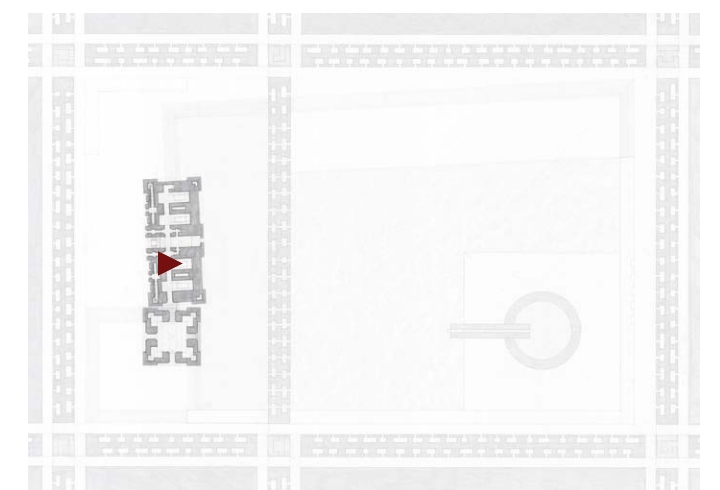
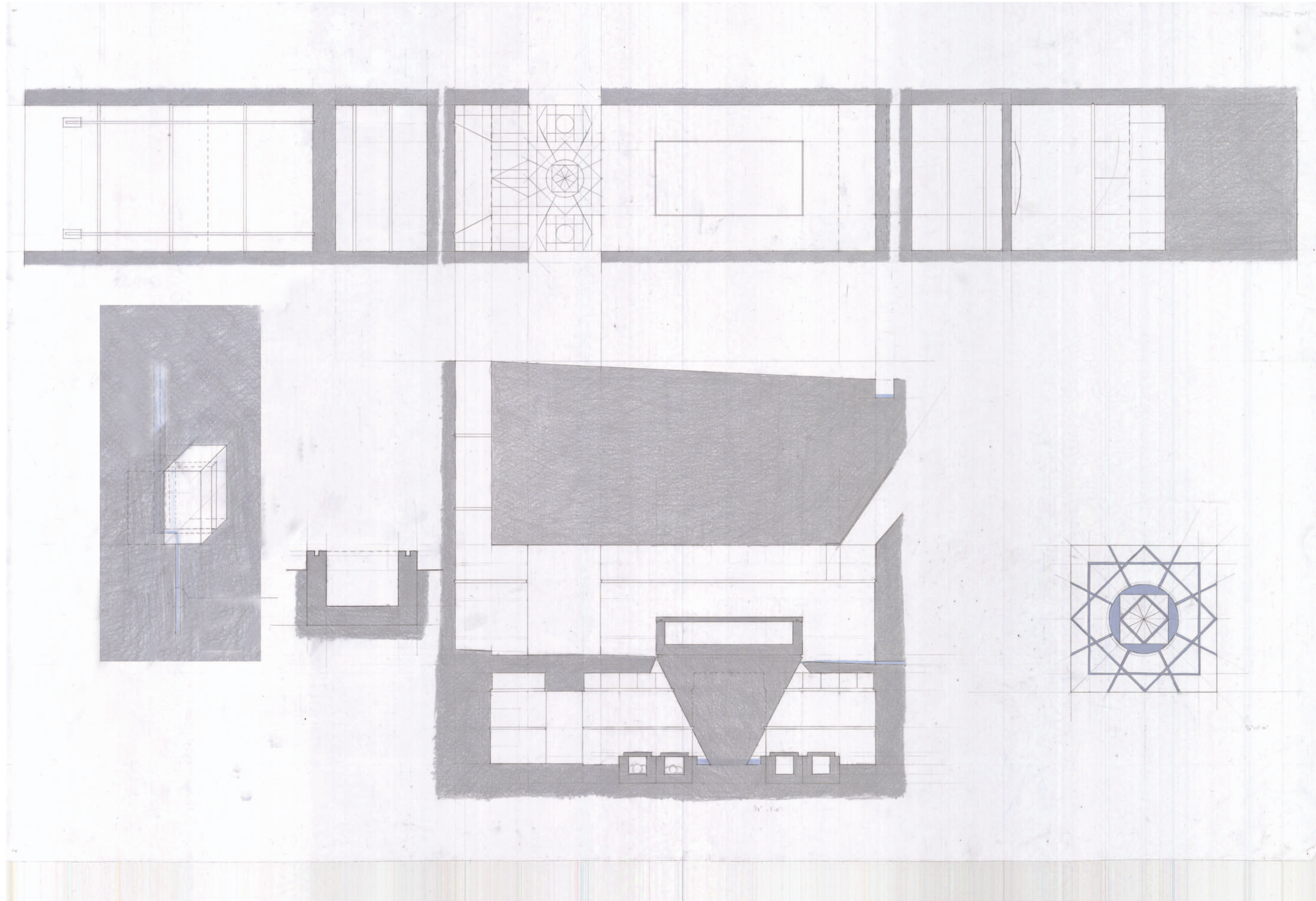


South Elevation (L) & North Elevation (R)

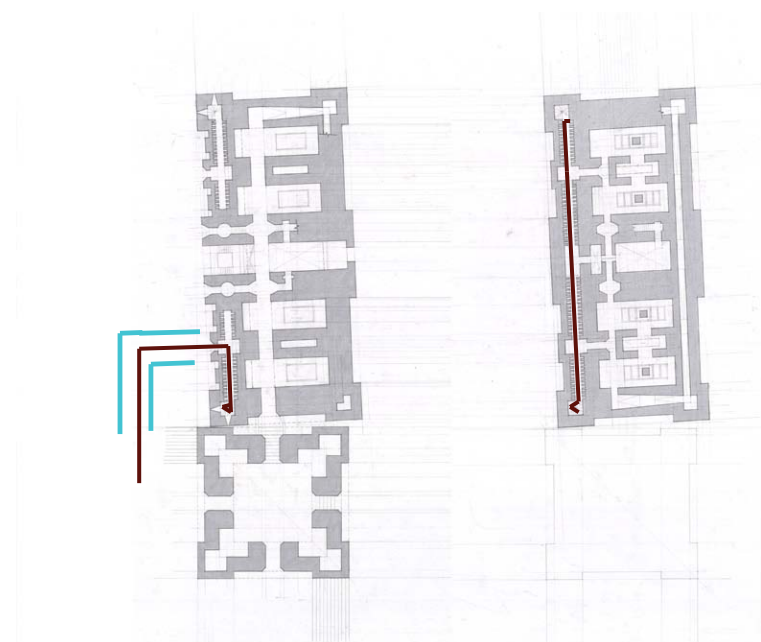


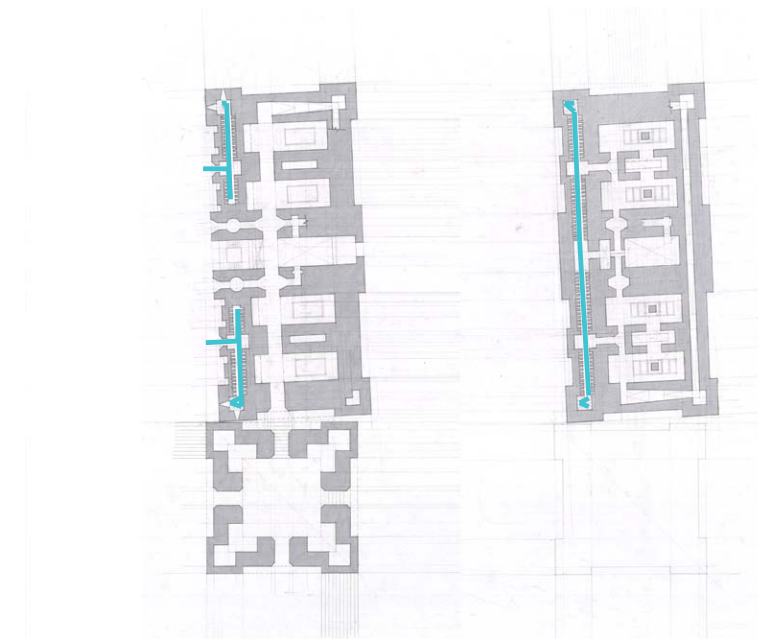
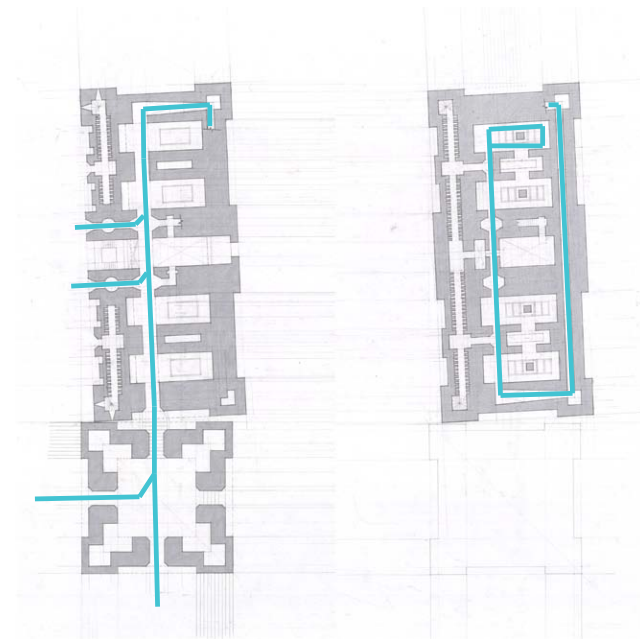
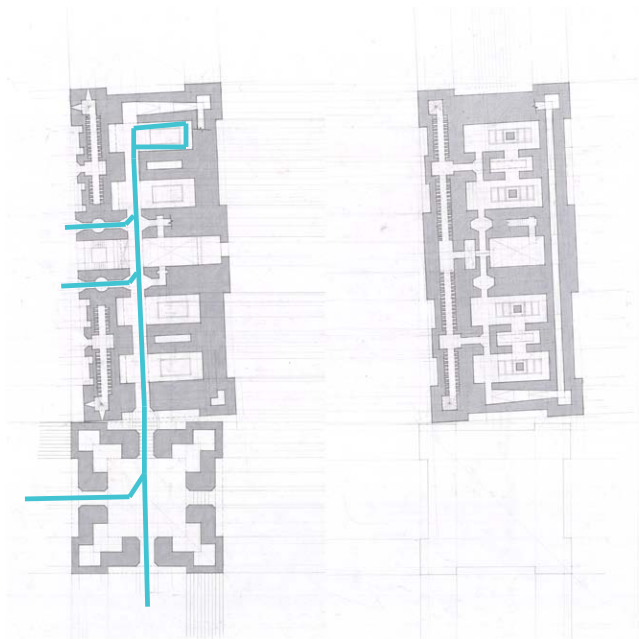


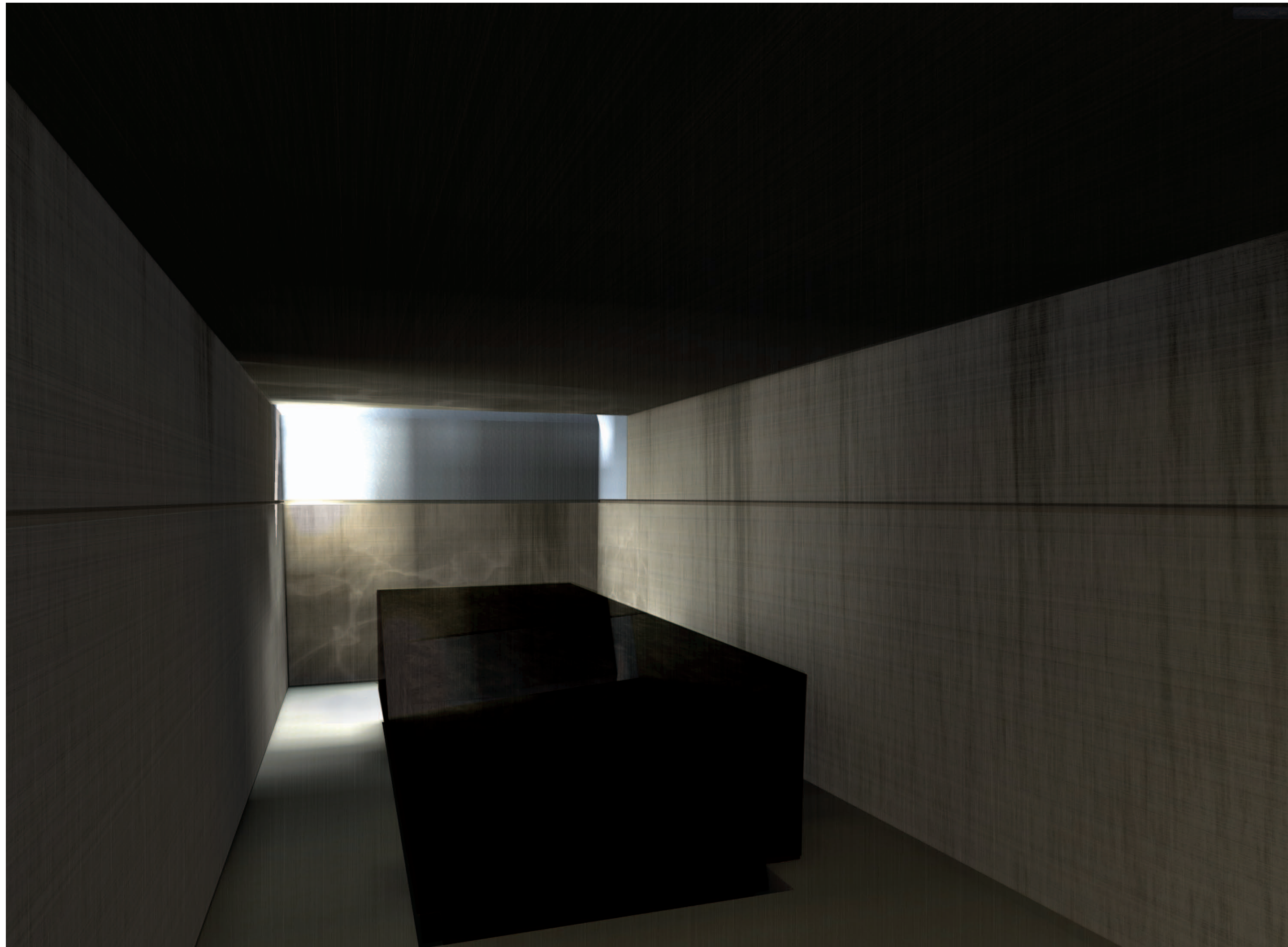


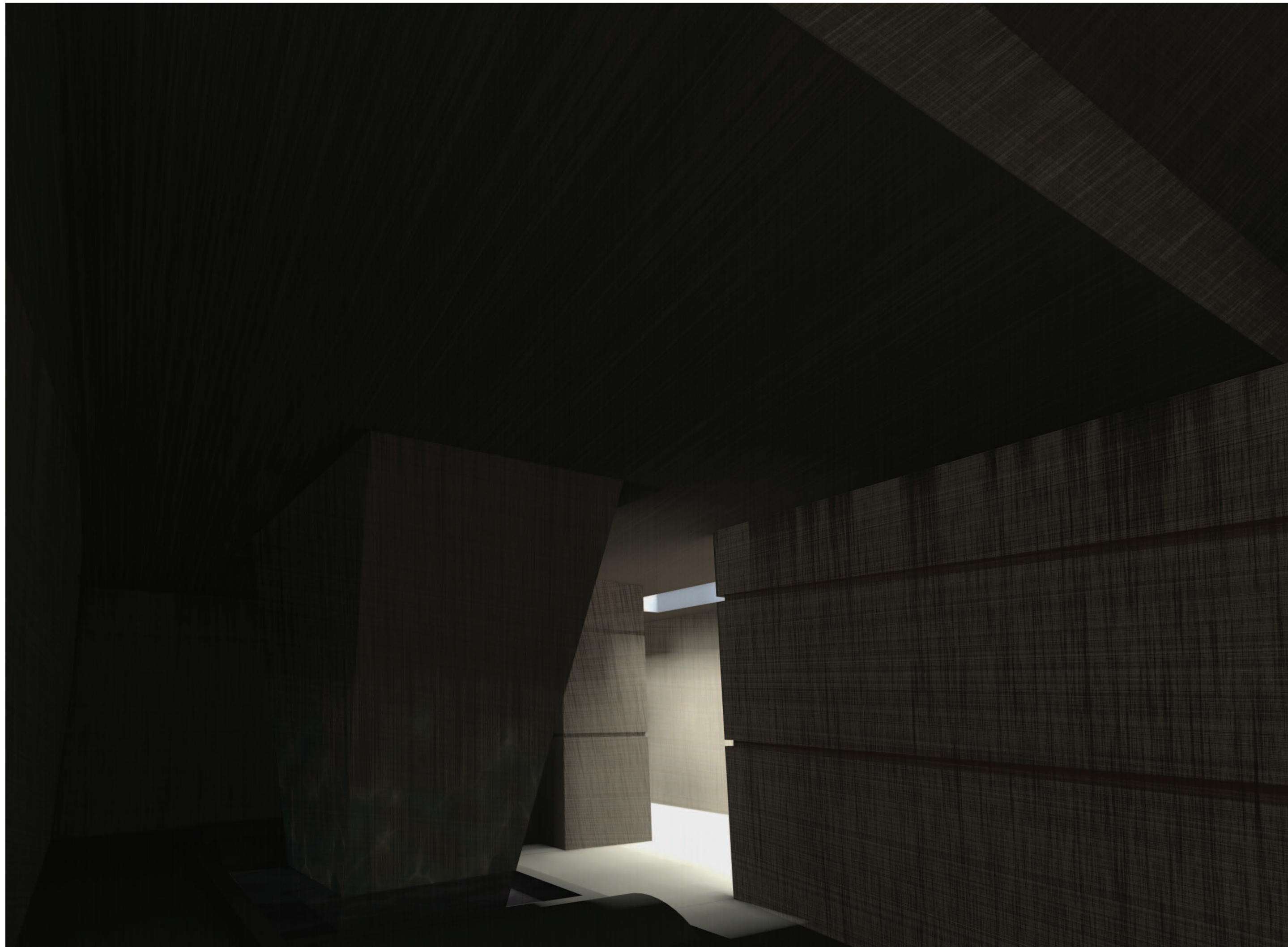


Martyr Cell
Plan, Section, Elevation



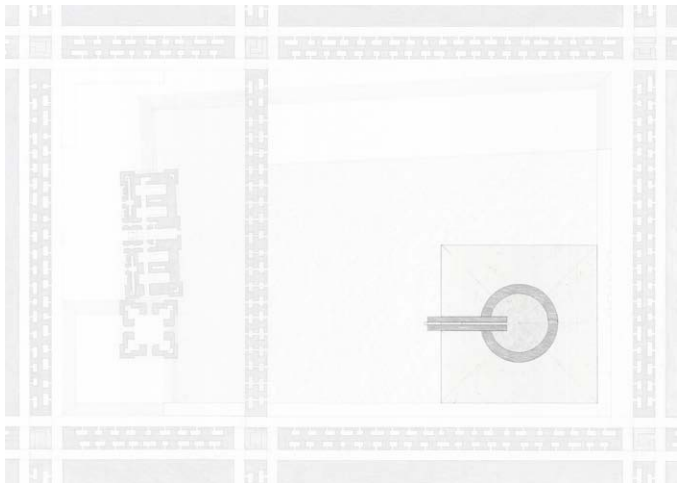
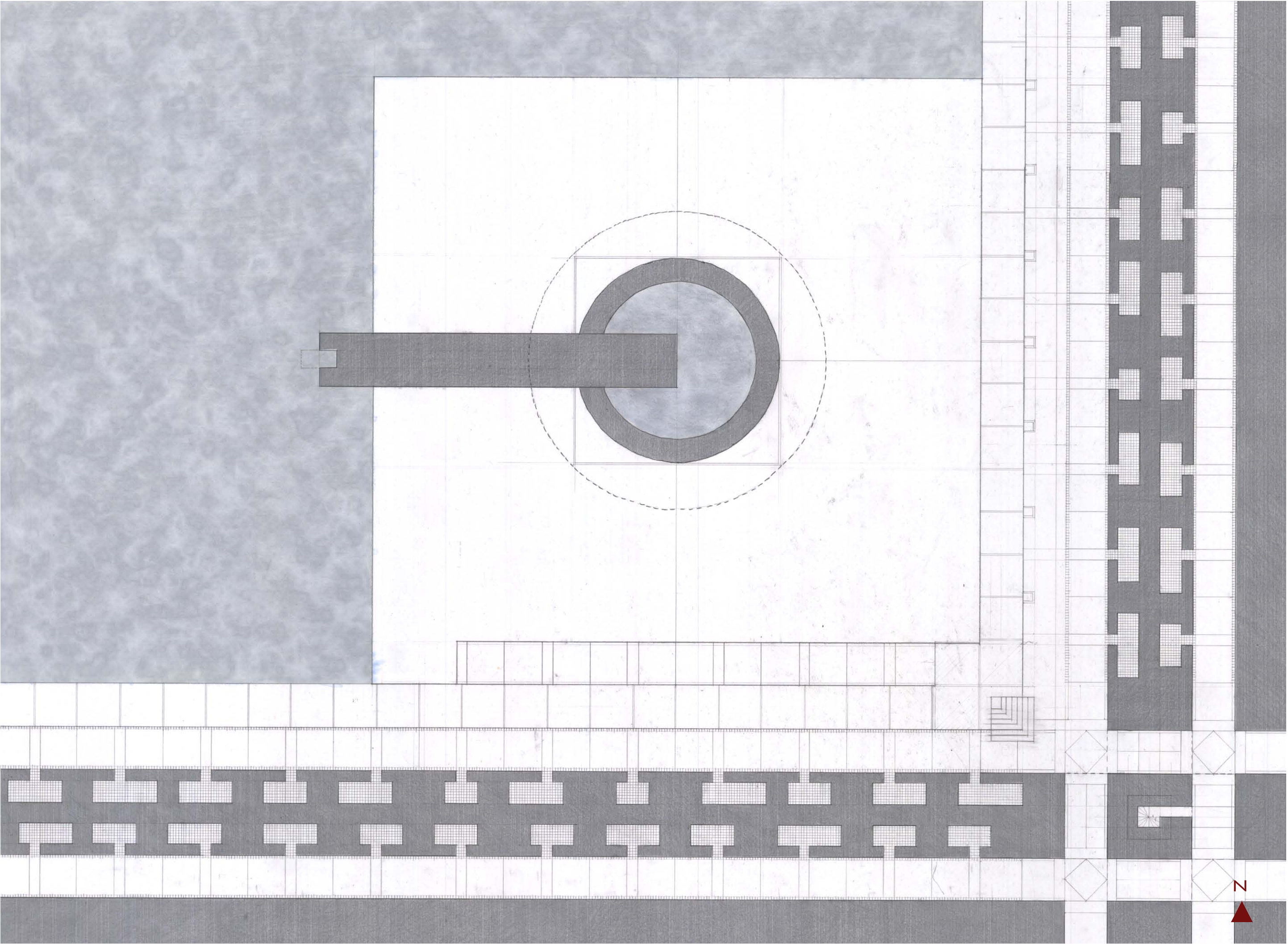


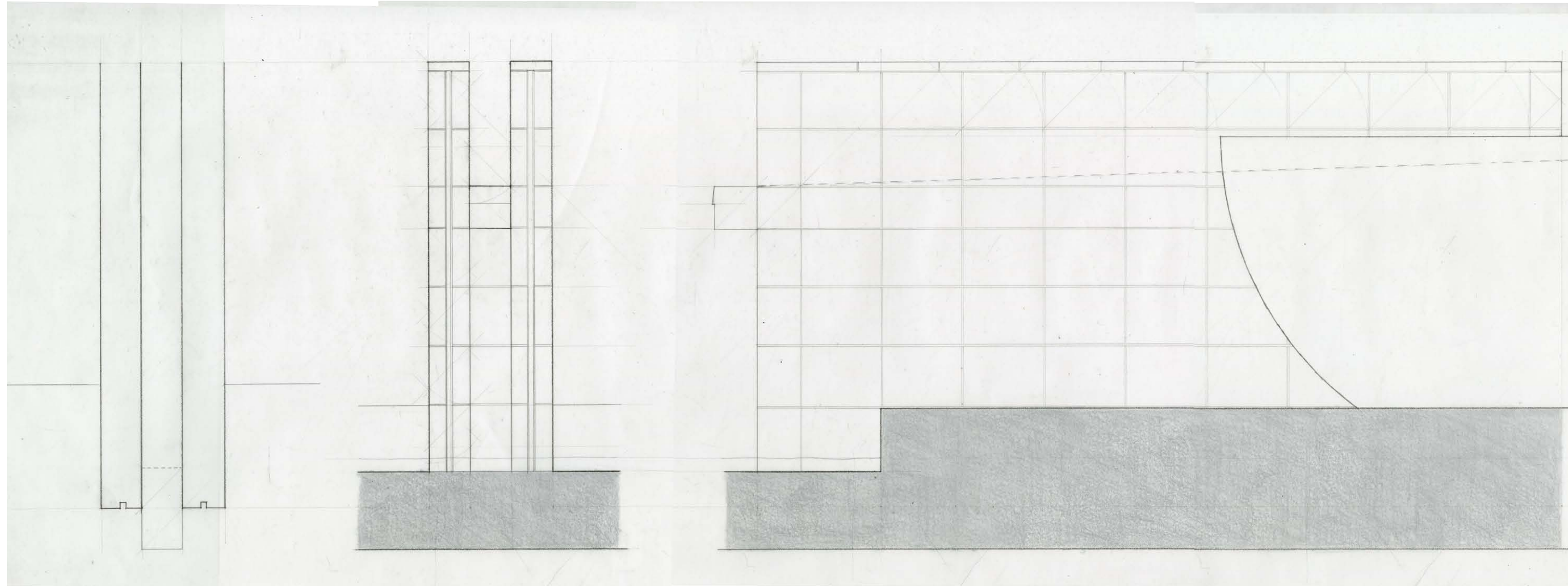


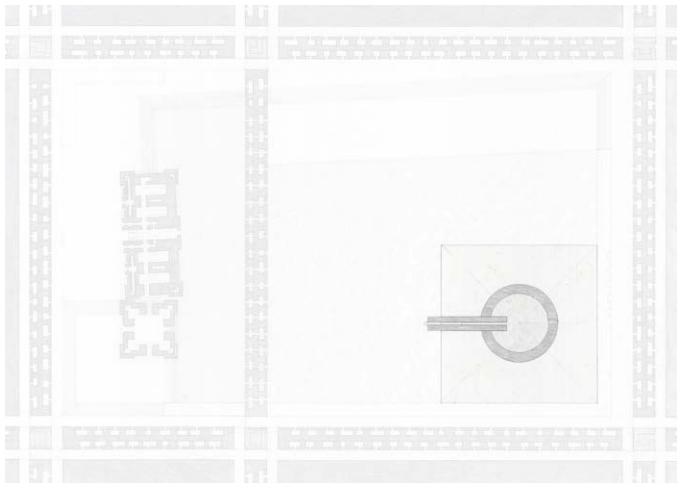
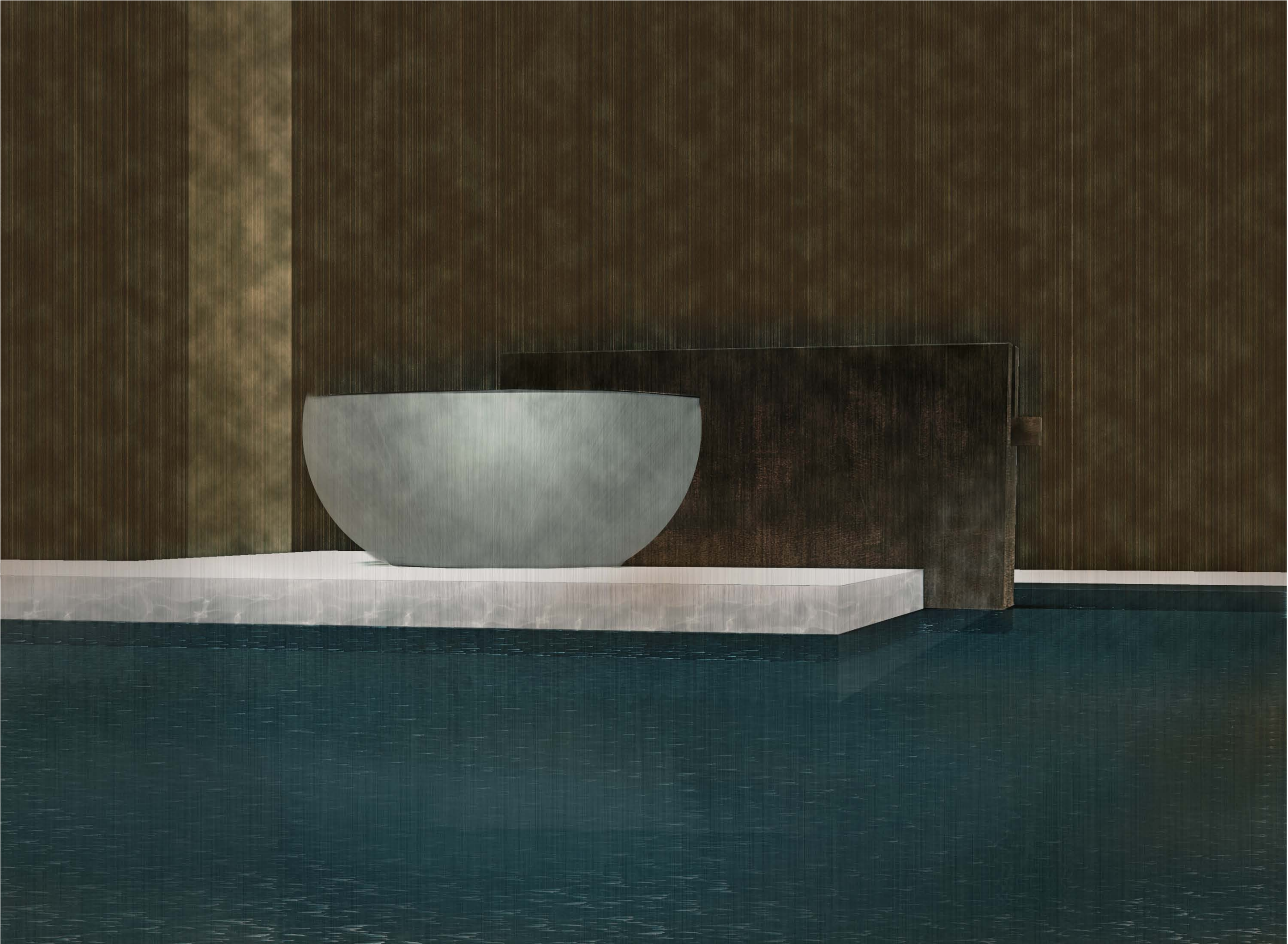


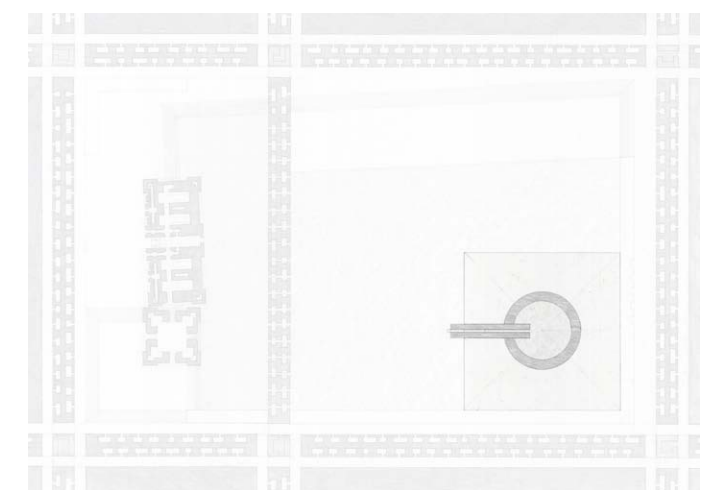
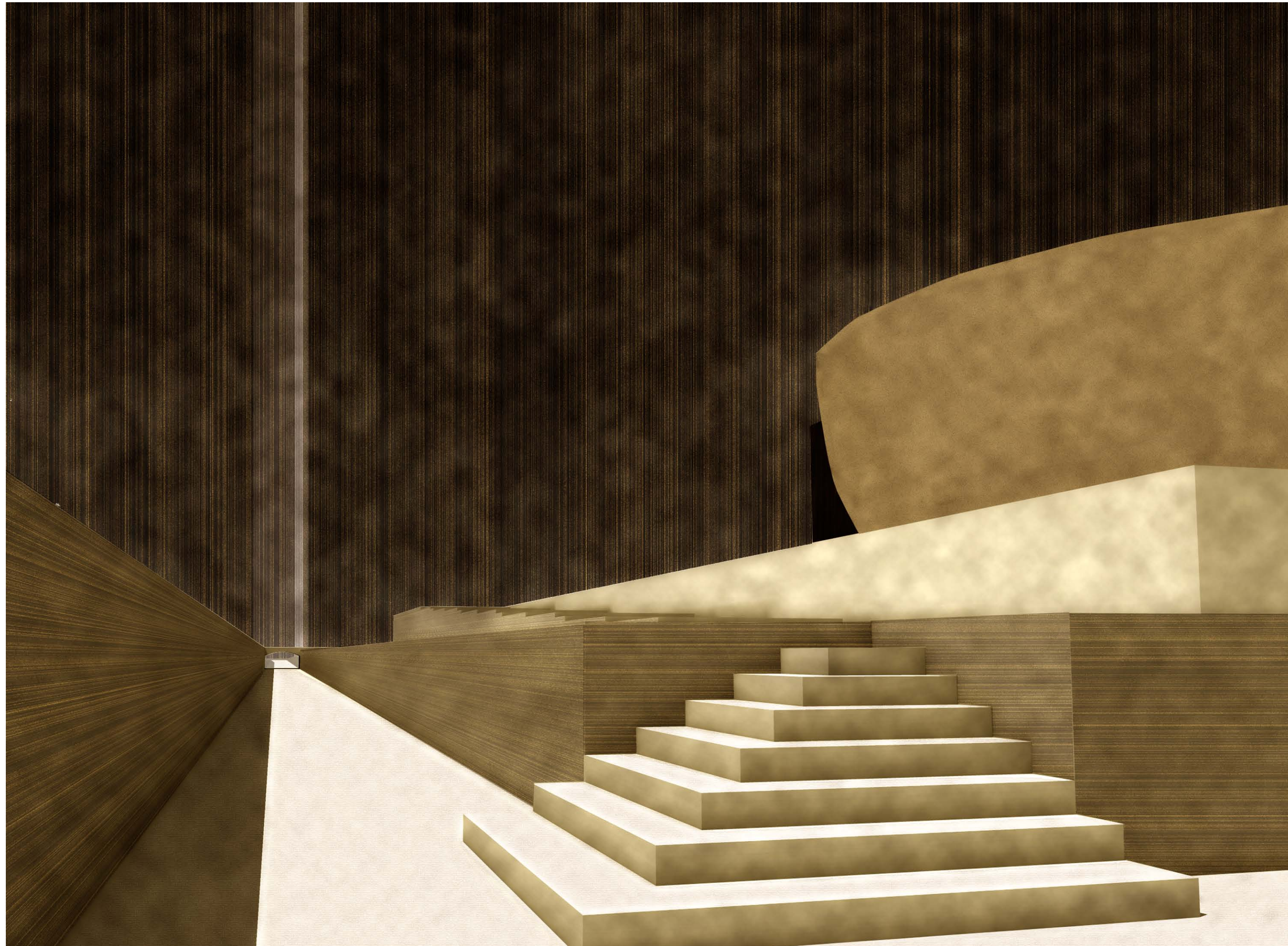
Water Tower

The simple form collects rain water that is then filtered within the base. The western arm of the water tower is an overflow scupper that assists in filling the site's two reservoirs. This water is a source of daily life, from drinking water, to bathing, to cleansing.

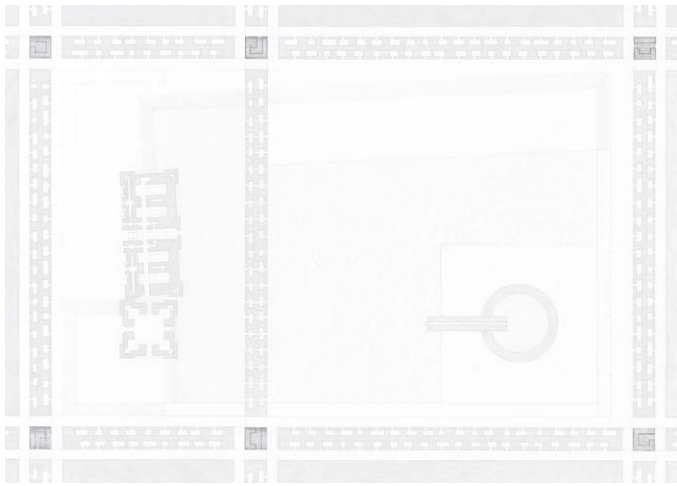
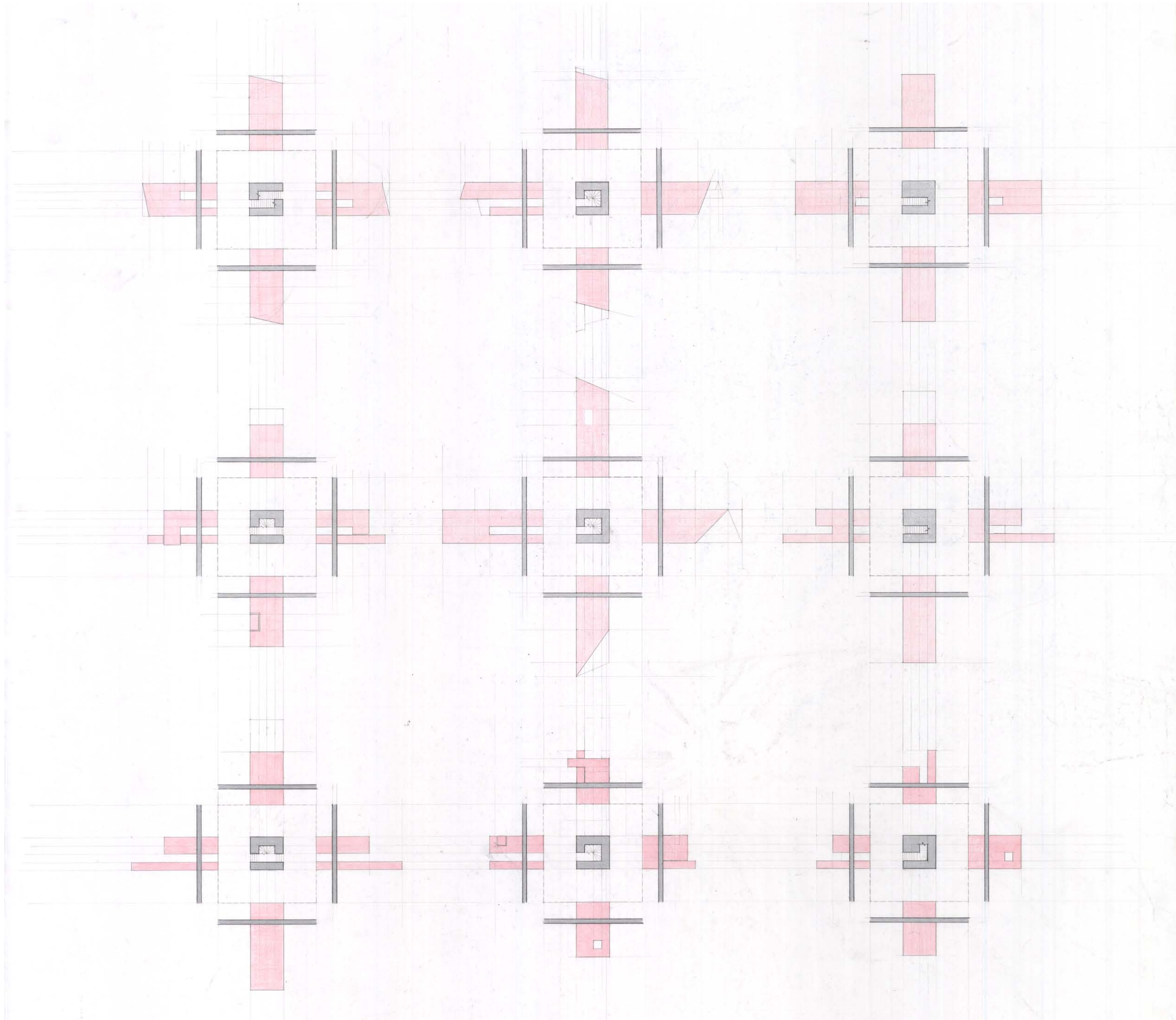


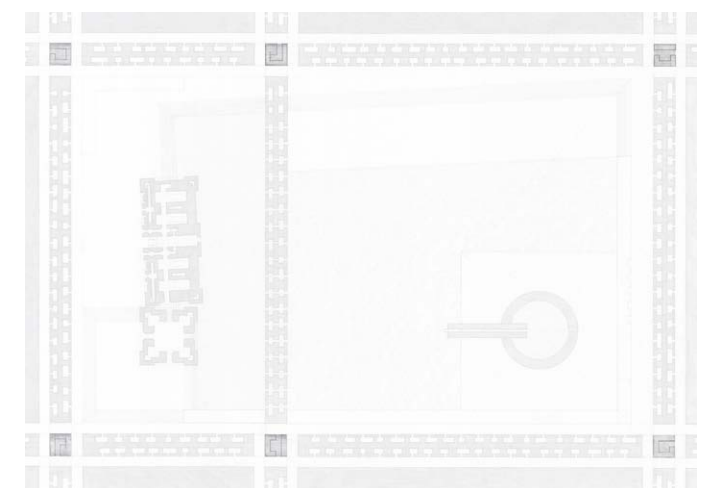
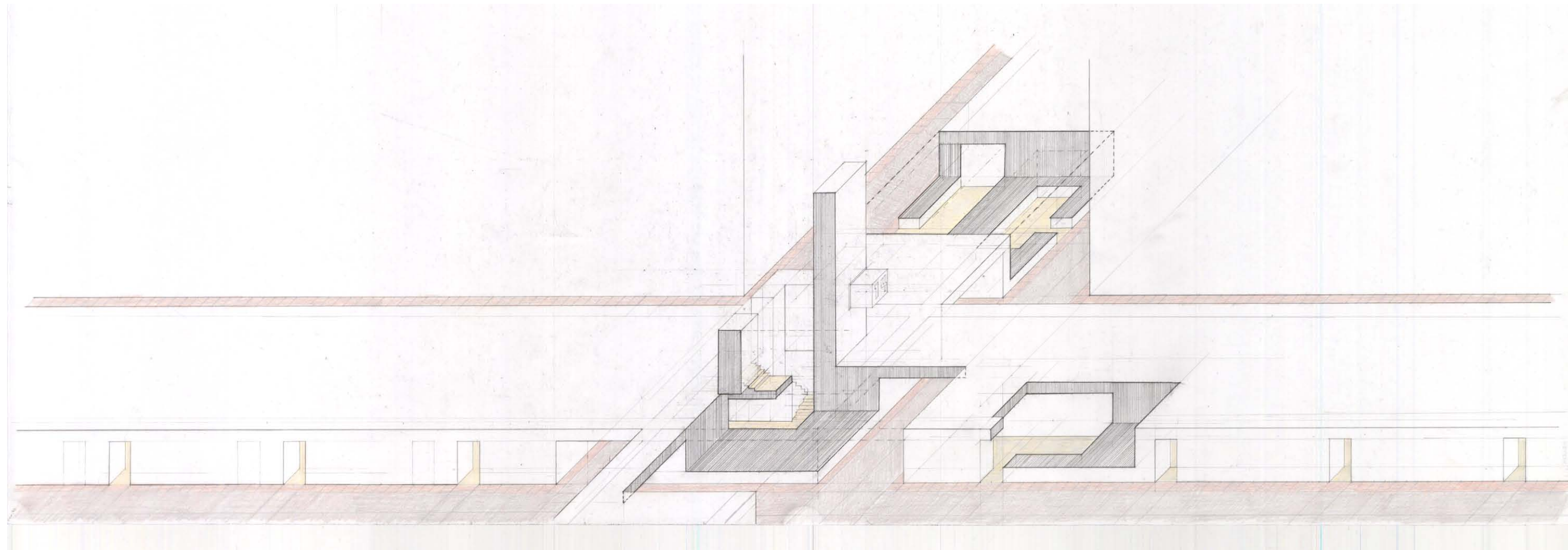


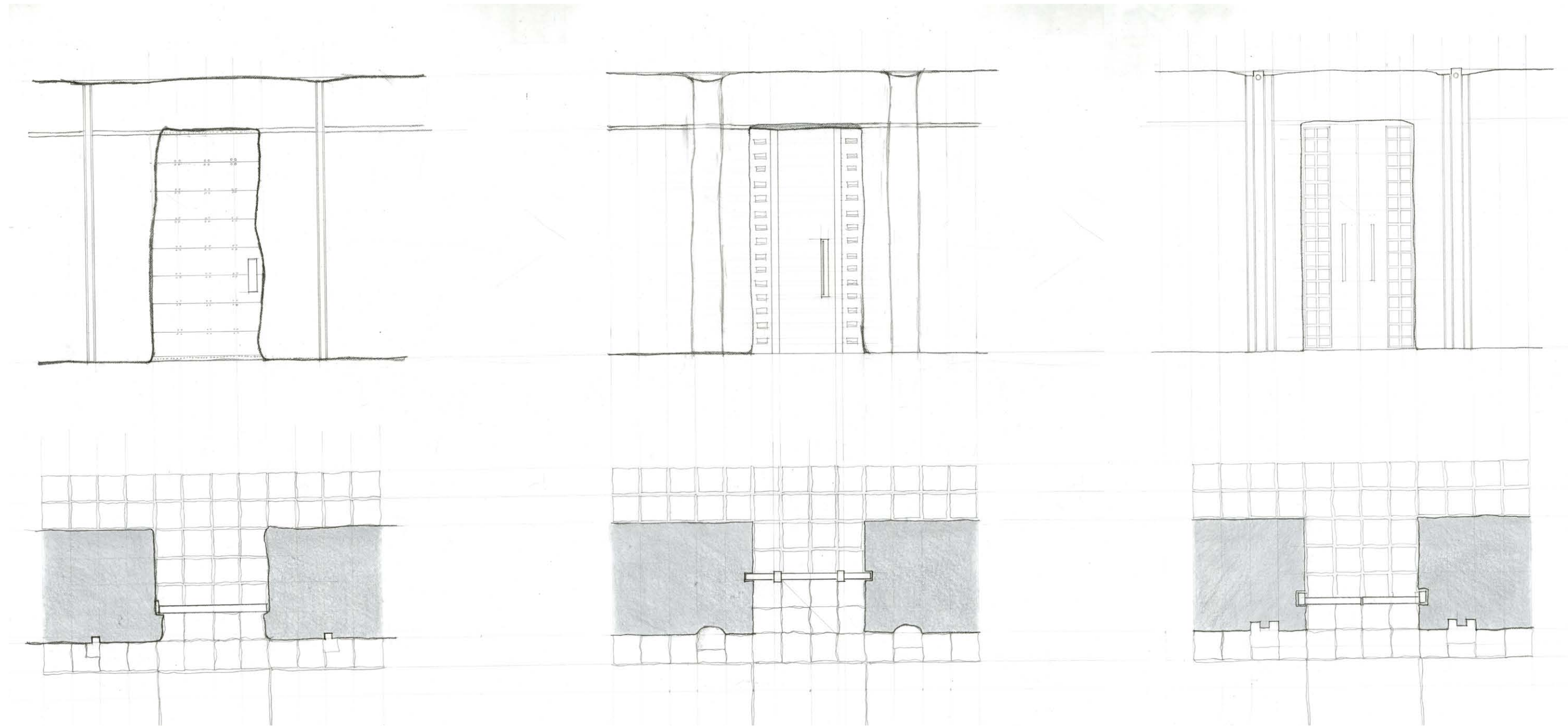


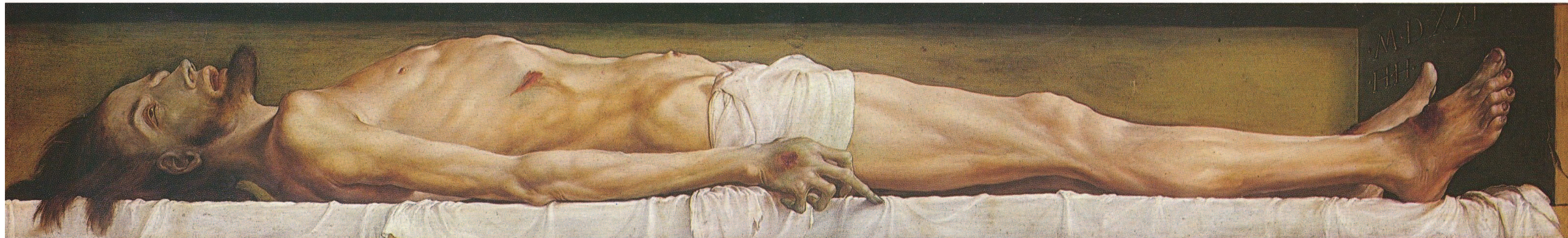


The stair pavilions connect the raised streets with the housing and sidewalks below while providing a visual marker. Each stair pavilion is unique, providing orientation within the city.

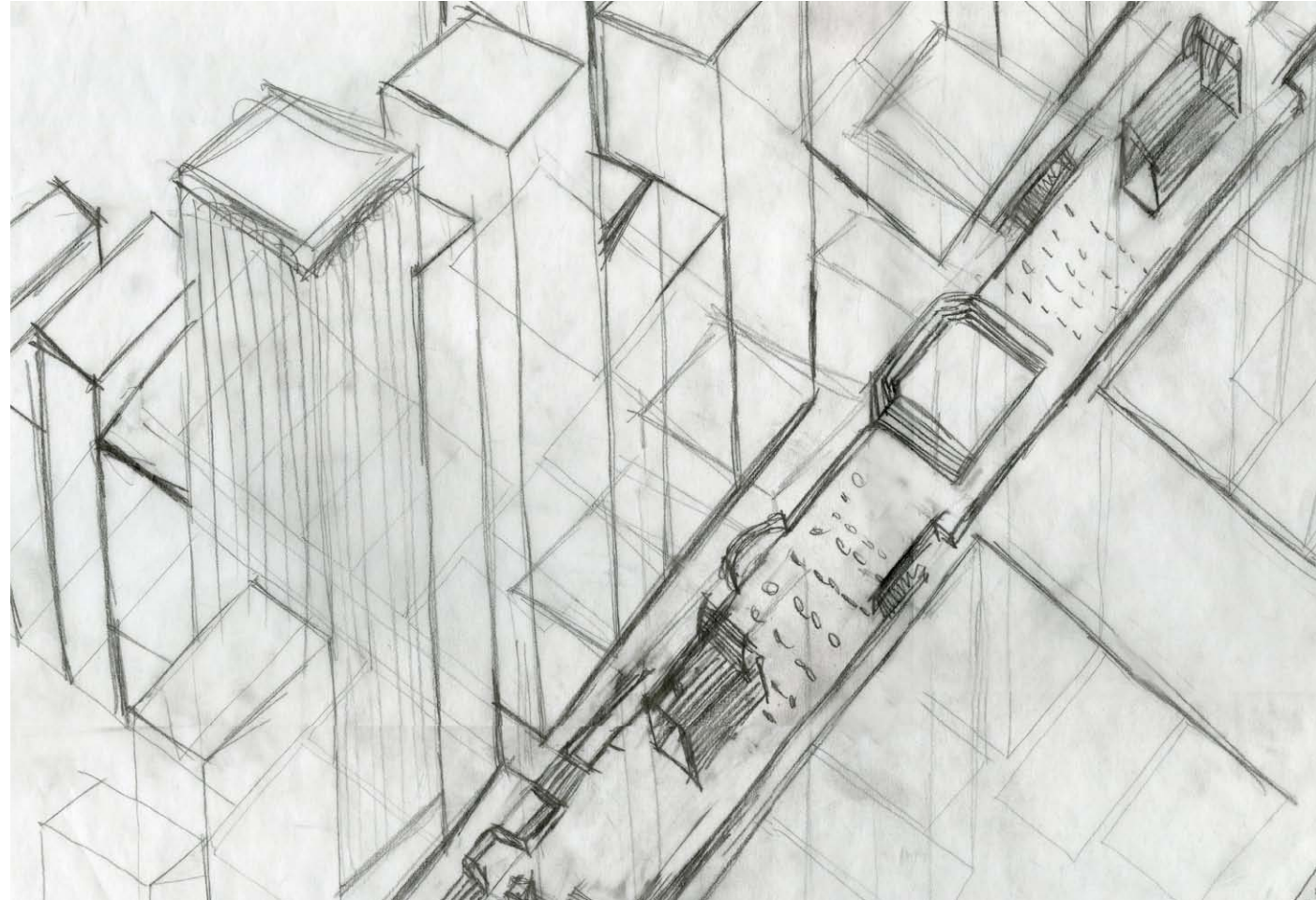


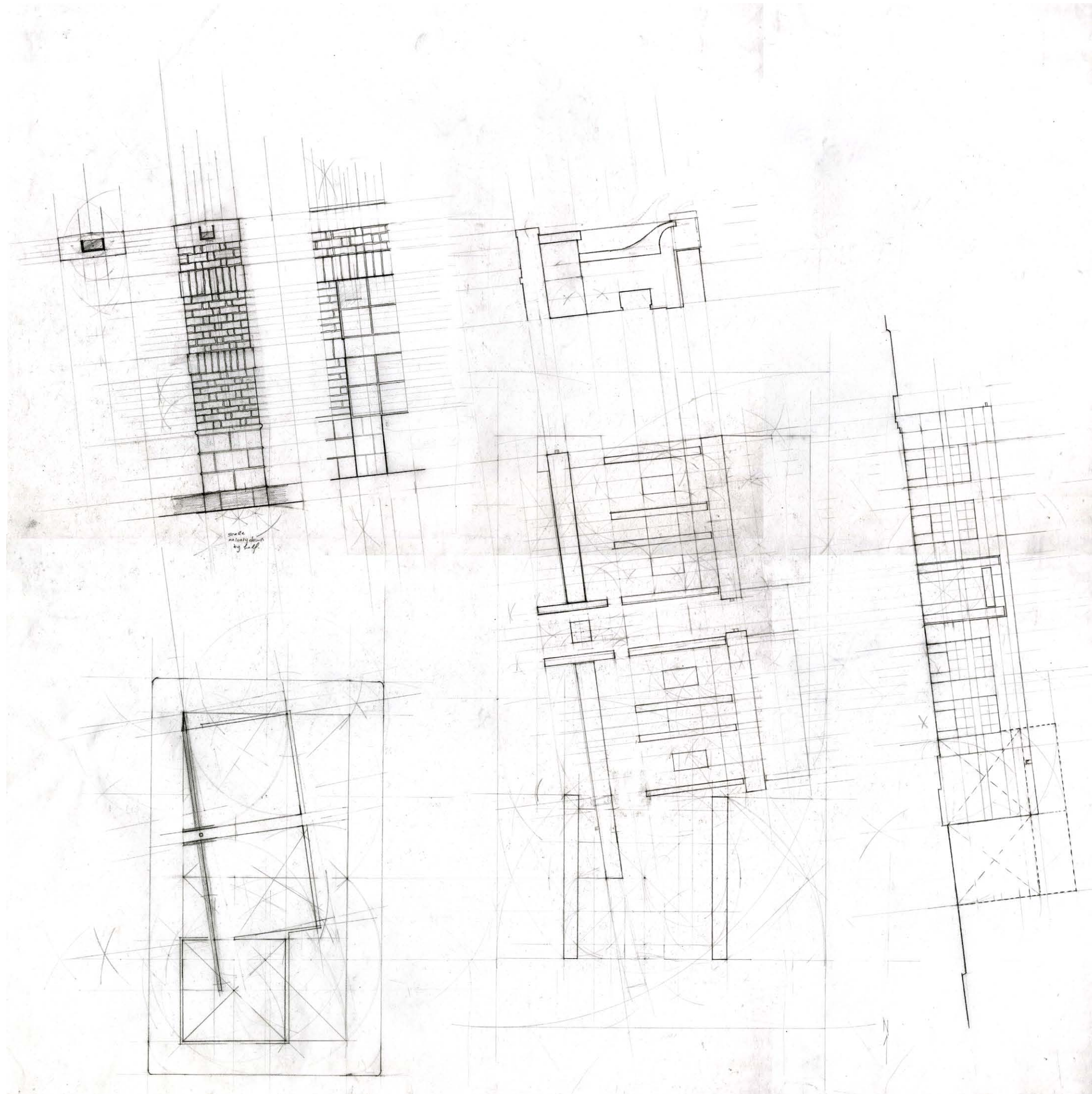


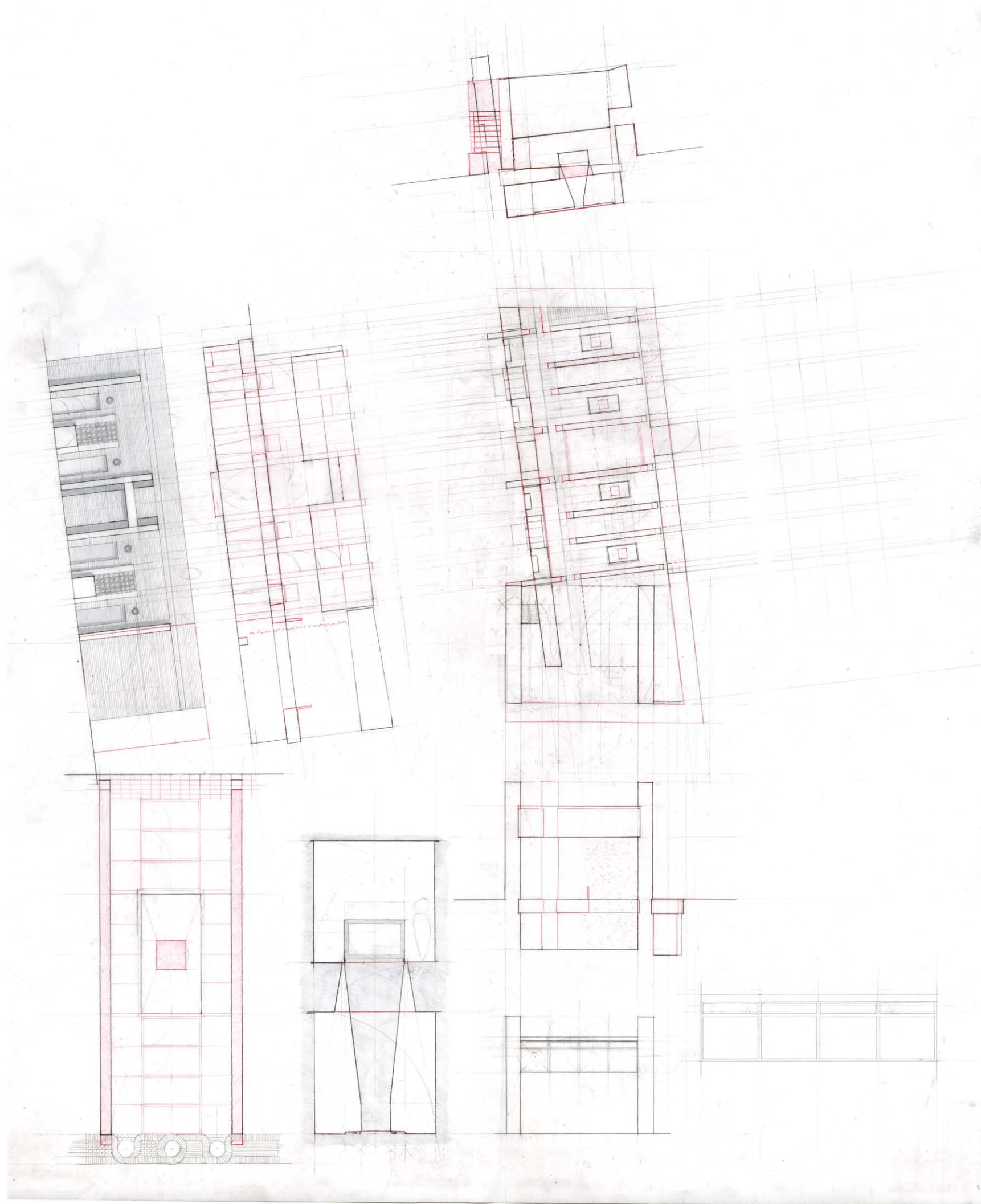


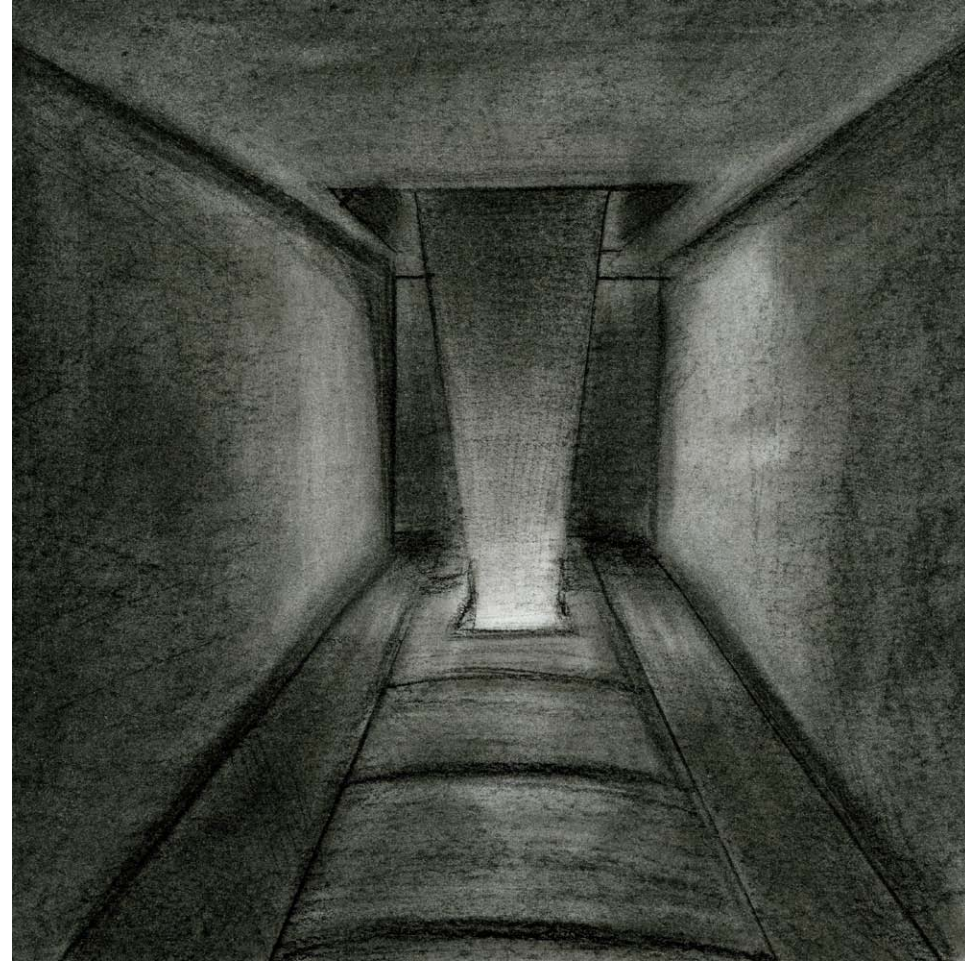
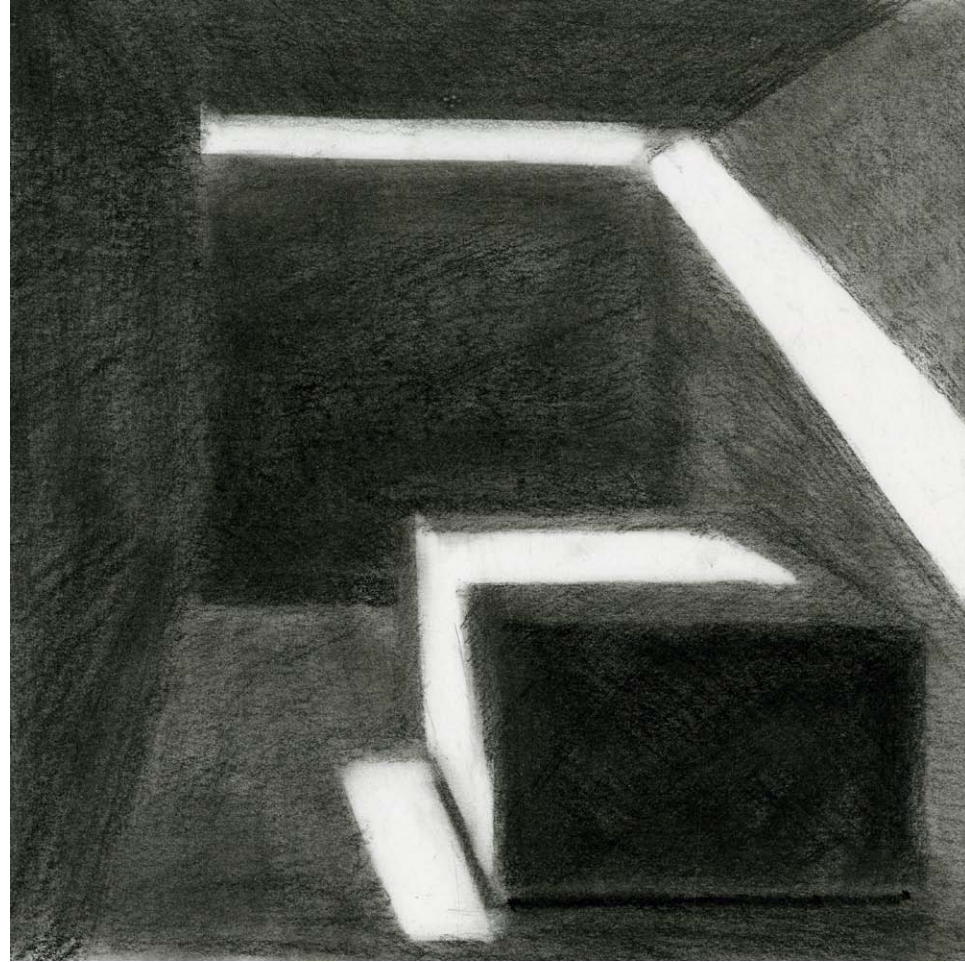


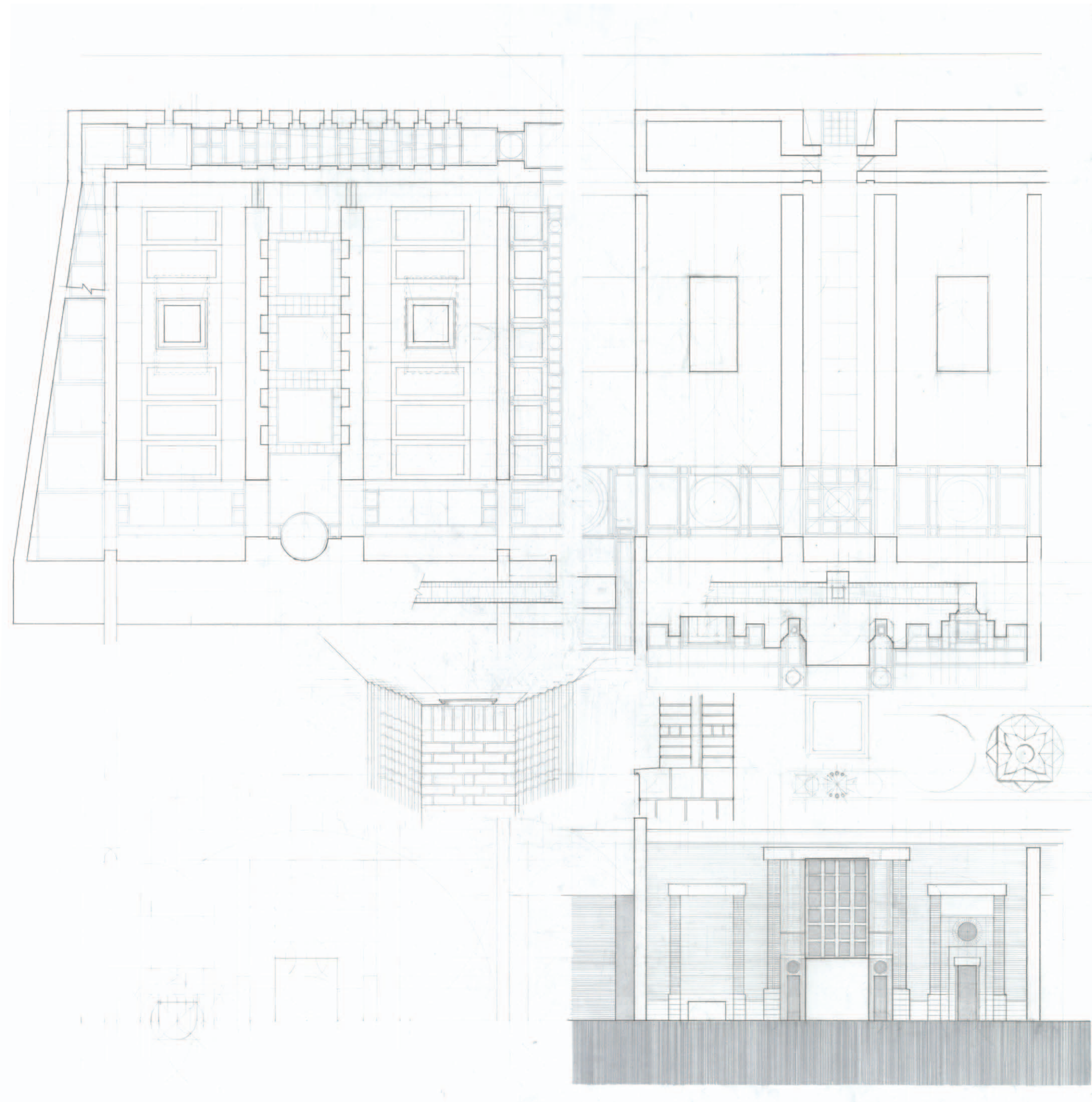
Holbein, Hans. *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. 1520-1522











Aries, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death*. Translated by Helen Weaver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Metcalf, Peter and Huntington, Richard. *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Robben, Antonius C.G.M. *Death, Mourning, and Burial*. Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Celant, Germano. *Aldo Rossi Drawings*. Milano: Skira Editore S.p.A. 2008

Ferriss, Hugh. *The Metropolis of Tomorrow*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1986.

Holbein, Hans. *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. 1520-1522.

Spaemann, Robert. *When Death Becomes Inhuman*. Translated by Adrian J. Walker.

Work Cited

Page 29 - Holbein, Hans. *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. 1520-1522.

All other images belong to the author