

ANIMATION studio

Exploring the bridge between the unconscious and the conscious

An Animation Studio
Exploring the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious

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Master of Architecture in Architecture

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ABSTRACT

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Form, space, rhythm, order, symmetry, balance, repetition, proportion and scale are few from a long checklist of principles that, if followed carefully by the designer, will result in "beautiful" architecture, or so I was told. However, what exactly is "beautiful"? In his book "The beautiful necessity" (1910, p.34) Claude Fayette Bragdon suggests that "Beauty is the name we give to truth we cannot understand". This statement implies that there is a hidden quality within each building, or even within each space, a quality that we can sense but cannot make sense of, a quality very similar to having a soul.

The soul seems to linger on the threshold that divides two opposite worlds, it is always in-between. Between the dream and the awake, between the physical and the imaginary, between the conscious and the subconscious and between the real and the unreal.

In this thesis, the "real" world consists of an animation studio (the program), the studio's staff and visitors, the selected site located in Alexandria, and it is bound by the building methods, materials and codes. The "unreal" world consists of four fictional characters that, assumingly, emerged from my subconscious and who live in a fictional dimension that overlaps ours.

The different encounters within the "real" world and within the "unreal" world, and also the interactions between the "real" and the "unreal" worlds are translated into an architectural language as an attempt to investigate the soul.

Acknowledgement

CAROLINA DAYER

Table of Contents

1	The “real” world
2	Site Selection
6	The “unreal” world
7	Images from the subconscious
15	The Contamination of “reality”
21	Experiment A – Wall of rhythms
25	Experiment B – The guardian
31	Luck and Coincidence
34	The Story
35	Man with an Umbrella
42	Old Man
47	The Queen
54	The child
62	Floor Plans
66	Elevations
68	Sections
71	Conclusion

The “real” world

In this thesis the “real” world stands for the actual physical site which is located in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia and is enclosed by Fairfax Street and Ramsey’s Alley. It also stands for all the spaces, functions and components found in a typical animation studio (screening room, editing room, office space, etc..). Moreover, the “real” world answers to the various building methods, materials and codes and is governed by the common laws of physics and gravity. In other words, the “real” world mirrors our consciousness and our consciousness mirrors the “real” world.



Site Selection

The site was fitting because it:

- Had a sufficient area and volume for the proposed program.
- was situated closely to King Street, the main commercial artery of Old Town, yet far enough from it to create a semi-private atmosphere.
- Faces Old Town's City Hall and the main public square, which hosts crowds for the weekly farmer's market or the annual festivals and celebrations.
- The basement level of the public square offered sufficient parking spaces within walking distance.

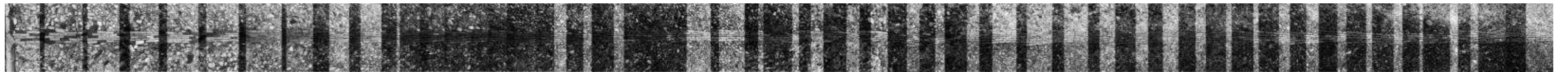


However, the site selection was not entirely based on the logical reasoning mentioned. Since the soul, a very mysterious quality, was being examined the site itself had to possess the same mysterious quality. Since I have worked with this site for a previous studio project I was very aware that it had an unexplained appeal and a very strange allure. And the fact that I was unable to understand why I felt this way about this specific site made it the perfect site for this study.

Also, since I was interested in examining the idea of the collective unconscious and not the personal one, I felt it was necessary to ask several of my colleagues and friends to familiarize themselves with the site and then asked them what impression it had left on them... their reactions were very similar to mine.



Existing West Elevation from Fairfax Street



Cobble Stones of Ramsey's Alley



Sky of Ramsey's Alley



Existing South Elevation Seen From Ramsey's Alley



Opposite Elevation Seen From Ramsey's Alley

“The word which has two meanings, the first direct, the second indirect, is the pure material of poetry and of literature, the material which these arts alone can manipulate and through which they speak to the spirit.”

Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*, 1977, p.16

The “unreal” world

The “unreal” world stands for a fictional world that is inhabited by fictional characters. These characters have, assumingly, emerged from my subconscious to my conscious over the course of the first four months of this study. Four of these characters have surfaced repetitively and consistently, reintroducing themselves in different locations and being involved in different tasks every time, while the other characters have appeared only once and then faded. Therefore, I made the conscious decision of casting the leading roles of this study to these four characters. They are the man with an umbrella, the old man, the queen and the child. All four of them interact with each other in a world that obeys laws and rules completely different from the laws and rules of the “real” world.

Sketches of the subconscious images/ashes/dreams

Images from the subconscious

Our eyes receive millions of images everyday that are then processed and saved by our brains. At night however, when we dream, this process is somehow reversed and all the saved images are reprocessed and re-received by the mind and are then resaved again. This creates an enormous archive of multiplying images that are being reprocessed, re-received and resaved over and over again. This archive contains images from our daily lives, our dreams, fantasies and imagination. So far, this archive is full of personal images, which means that it is different from one person to another based on how they choose to live, think, and fantasize. However, what if we all shared a section of that archive? What if there was a common memory that we all share and that we have always shared?

This common memory in particular is what intrigued me because I thought within it I may discover the soul or at least a part of the soul. So I searched through my dreams while asleep and through my mind flashes while half or fully awake. I carefully listened to the songs I found myself humming every morning. I watched the numbers, mainly time, and how they would repeat, be consistent, follow a pattern and sometimes not.

Then I started to draw some of the images that seeped to my conscious, the images that I thought, to the best of my knowledge, were deep from the “collective unconscious” as Carl G. Jung describes it. These images were mostly of objects, scenes, landscapes, interior spaces, beings, etc... and it was from these images that the four characters emerged.



Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious

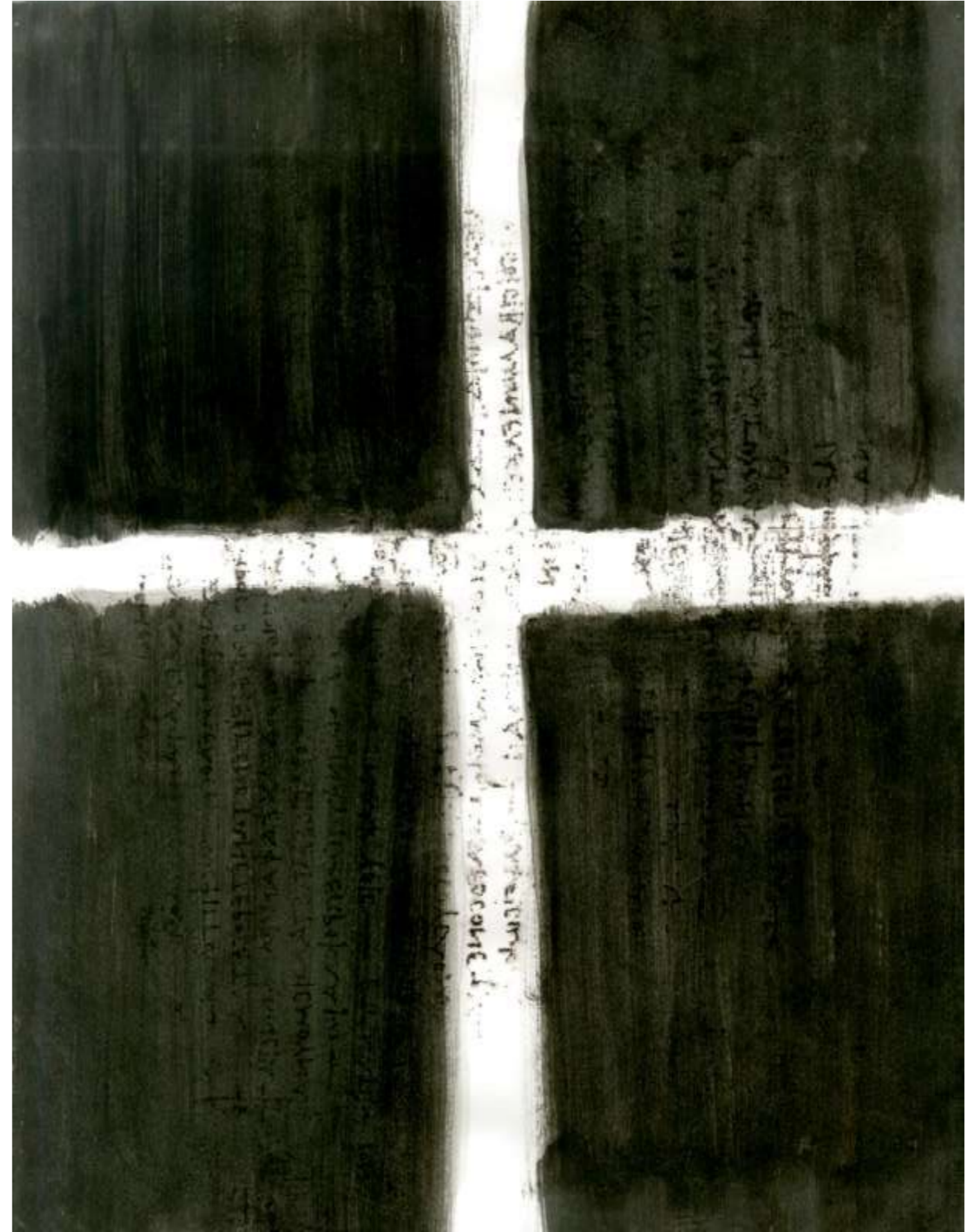


Image from the subconscious

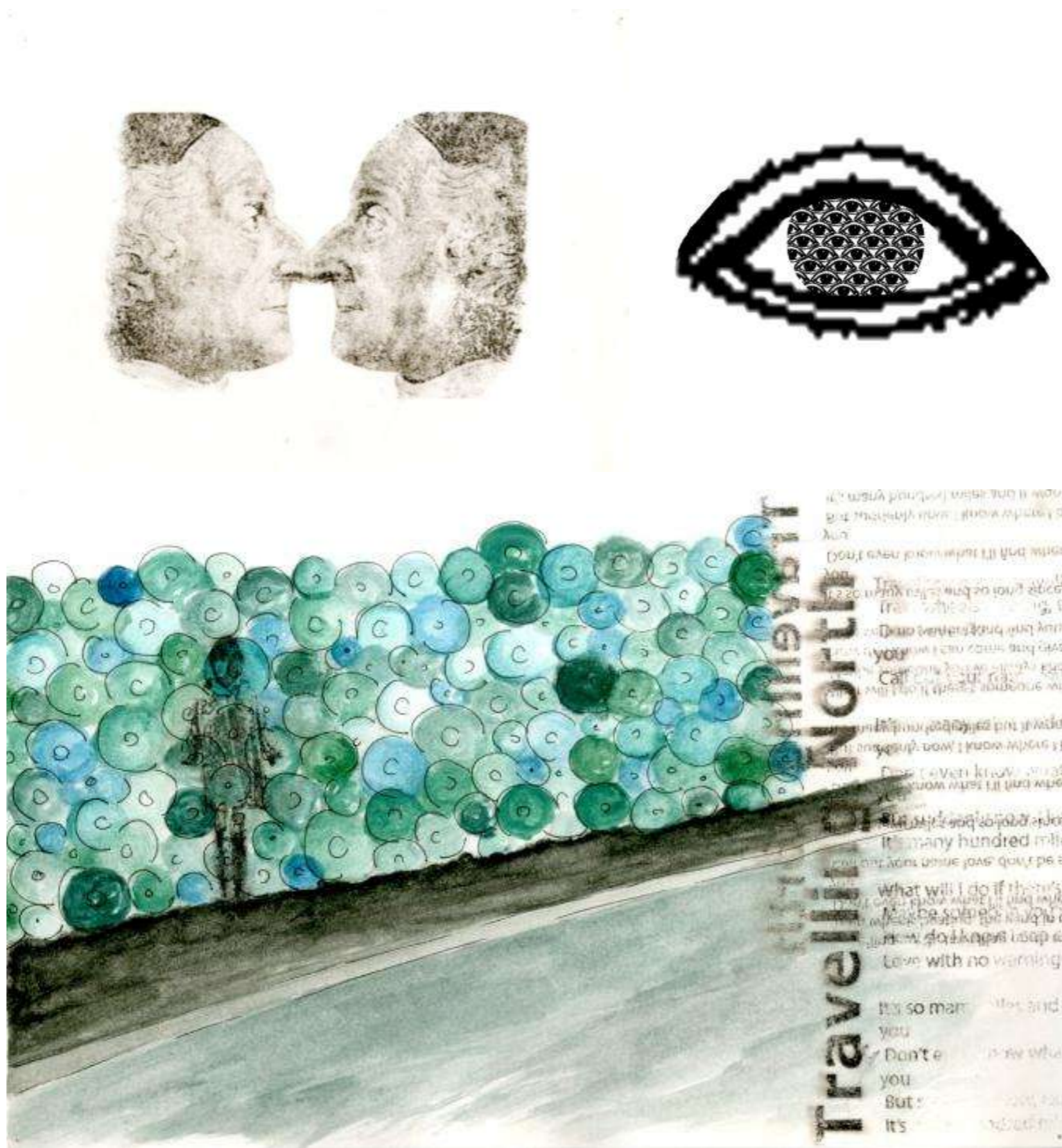


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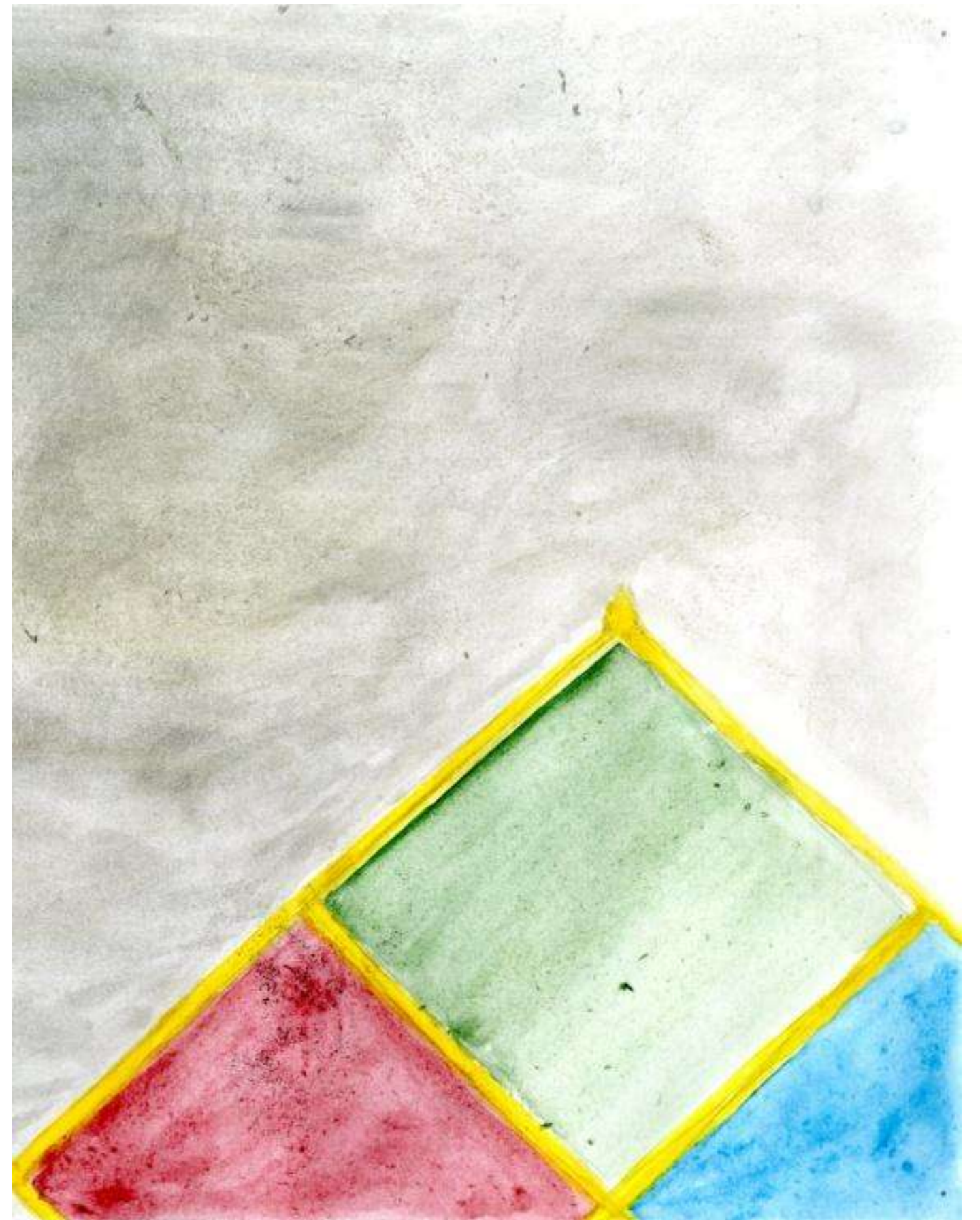



Image from the subconscious


Images from the subconscious

↓ HIGH CONTRASTING COLORS



* Occasional Text
Kuntick, Reutik.

↑ More sense during the dream but loses sense when awake.



* DIMMED LIGHTS / DARK



NEVER BUGS ALWAYS MARK THE TRANSITION FROM THE DREAM WORLD TO THE REAL


→ KICK OUT AGENTS
↳ they provide the right amount of scene that will allow person to wake up & claim consciousness
↳ they only exist in the real world though



UNREAL WORLD
* DARKER

↳ Tint of Black
DARK BROWN
SEPIA

FILTER OVER EVERYTHING



Images from the subconscious



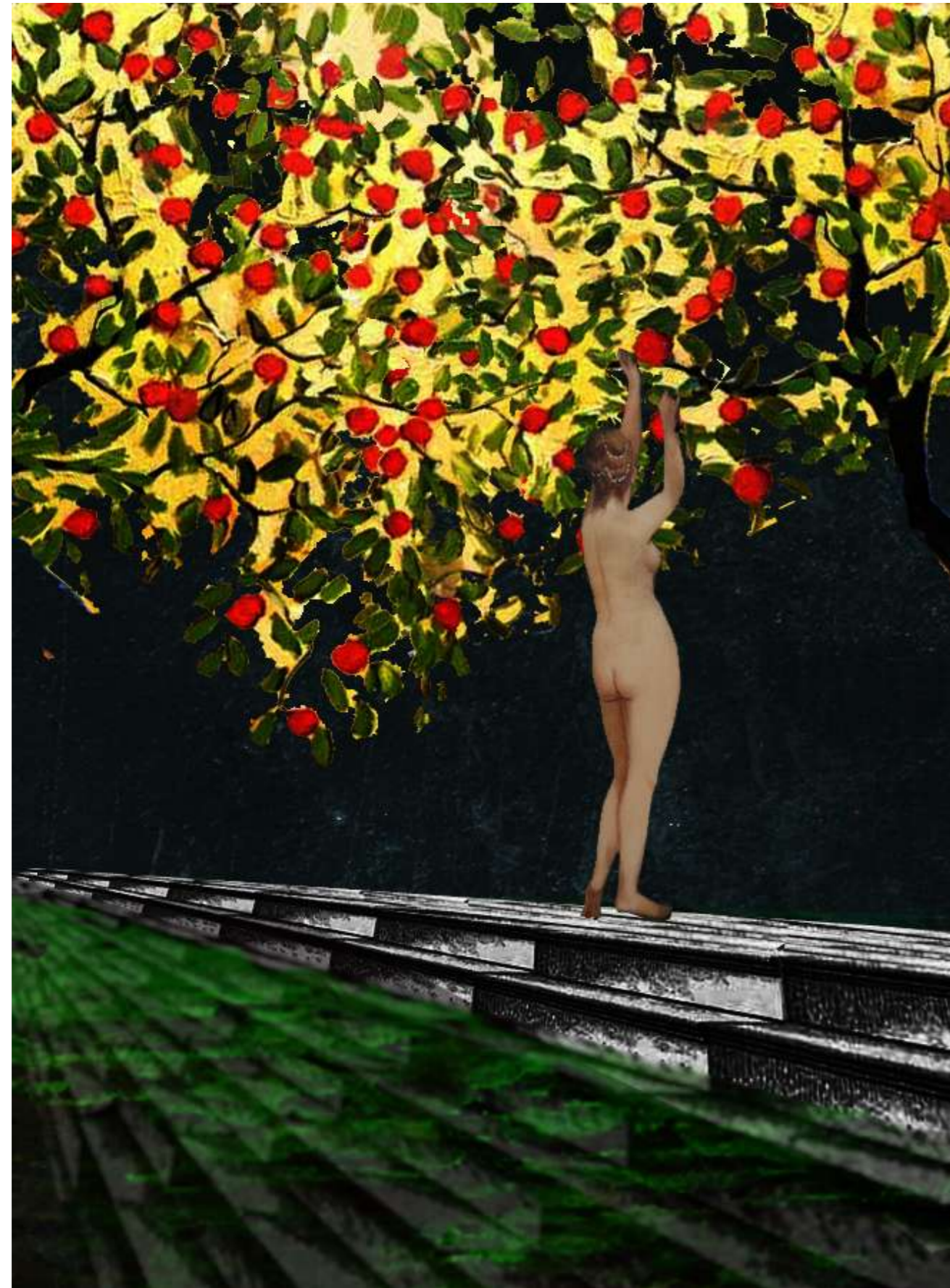


Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious



Image from the subconscious

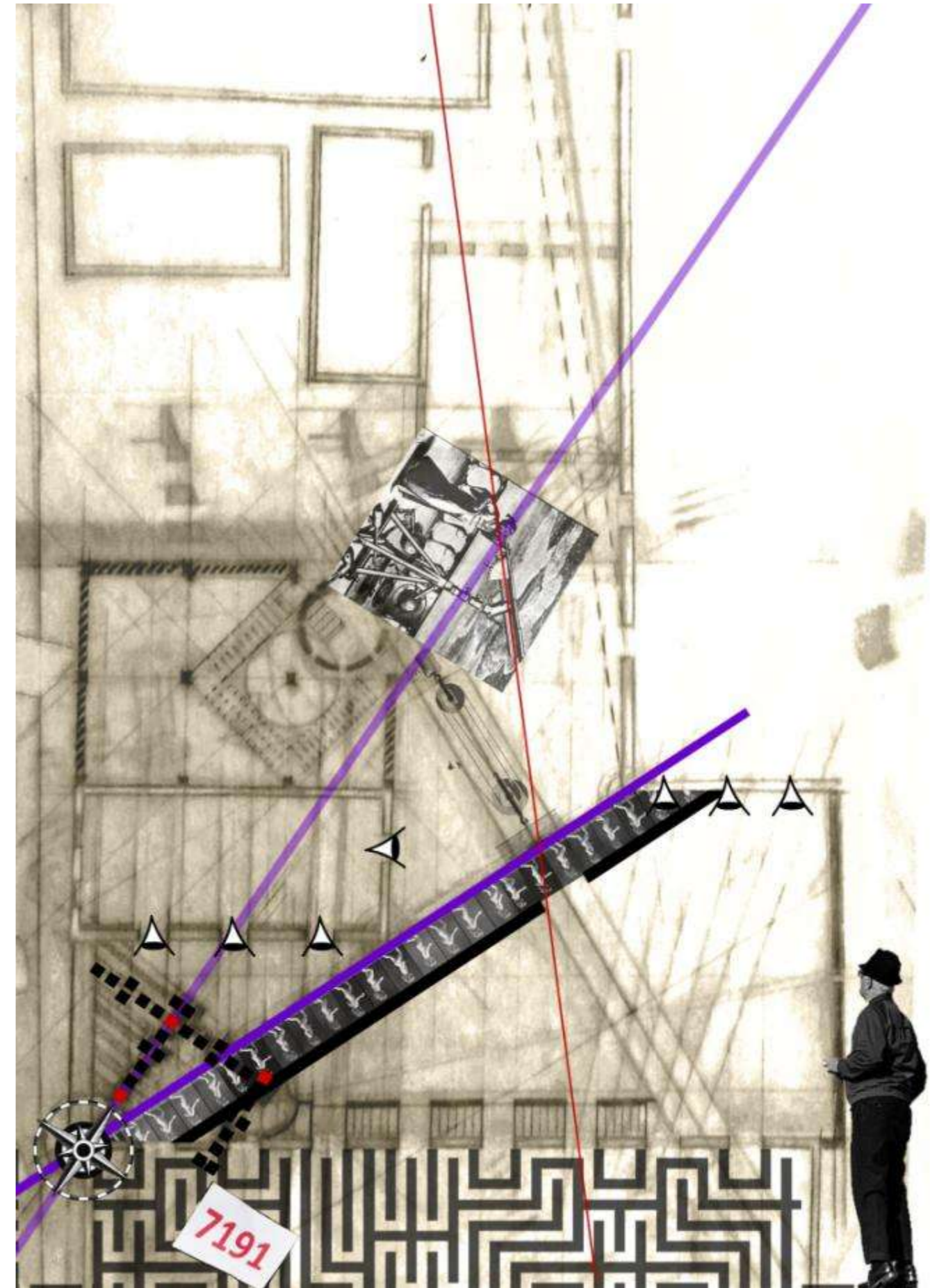
“The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul”

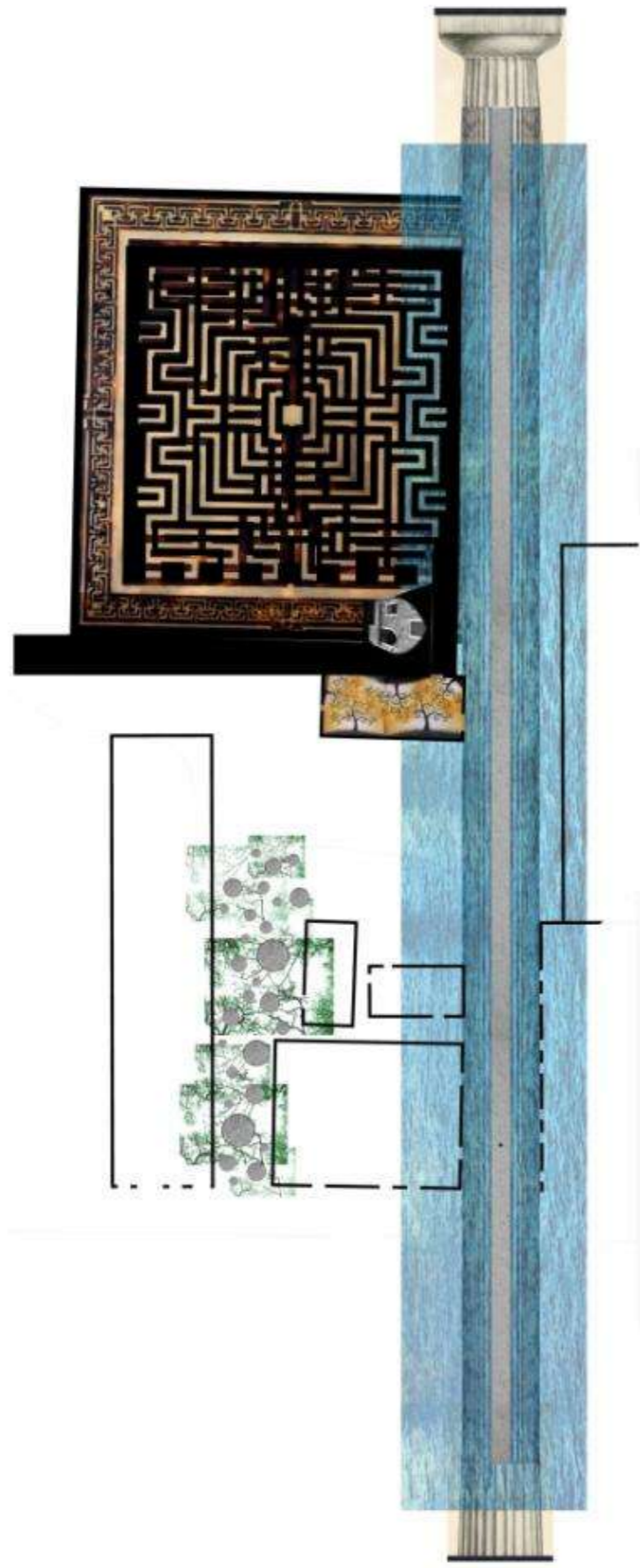
Carl Gustav Jung, CW 10: Civilization in Transition, “The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man” p.304

Contamination of “reality”

Merging the “real” and the “unreal”

The “real” world and the “unreal” world are very independent, there is nothing in common between the two. But in order to investigate the intangible “soul” through the design process of a tangible animation studio, I had to make a conscious decision of merging the “real” world and the “unreal” world together and then examine what could emerge from such a merge. So the four characters from the “unreal” world were forced to inhabit the “real” world. However, it is not that simple because some of the rules and laws of the “unreal” world have also seeped to the “real” world along with the man with an umbrella, the old man, the queen and the child. After the merge had taken place I tried to translate the various encounters and series of events that took place in this new world into an architectural language that reflects the “real”, the “unreal” and the merged worlds.





The site expressed in the “unreal” world language



The “unreal” bird positioned in the “real” site





The “unreal” three red doors located in a “real” elevation



The “unreal” lady on a swing in front of a “real” elevation





Pictures taken from the “real” site made into an “unreal” site

“The biological rise and the rise of consciousness thus signify a constant removal of the boundary between representation and reality at the cost of the transcendental part of the world , and in favor of the perceived part.”

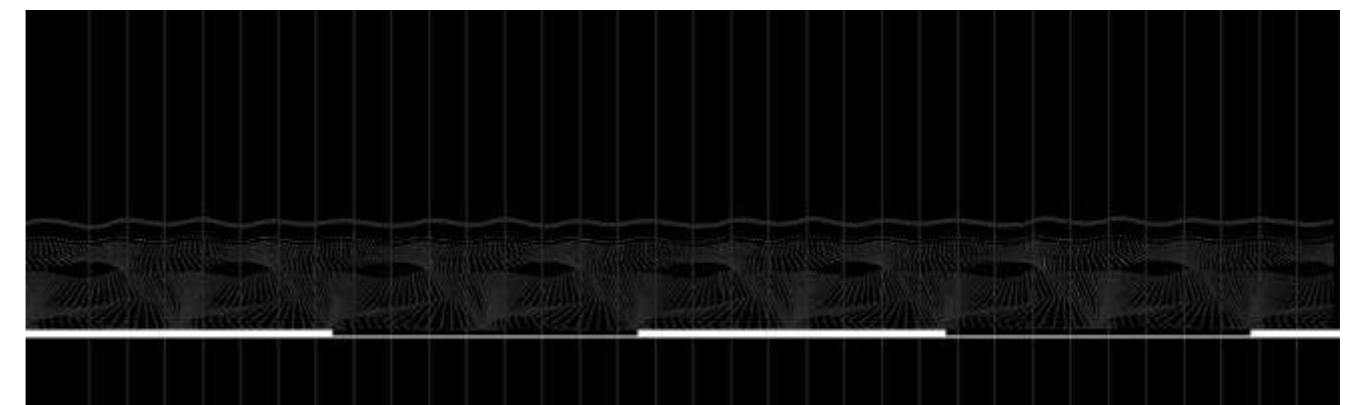
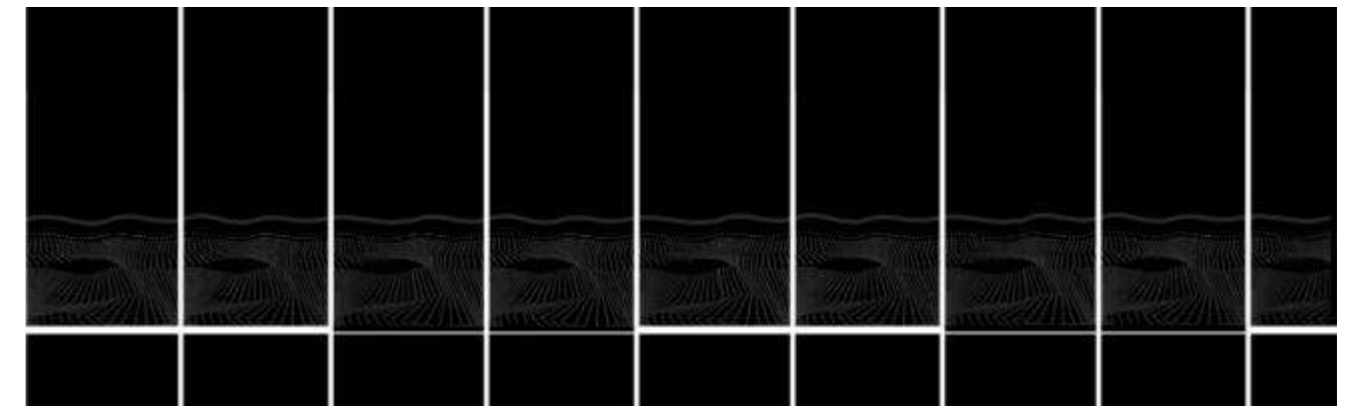
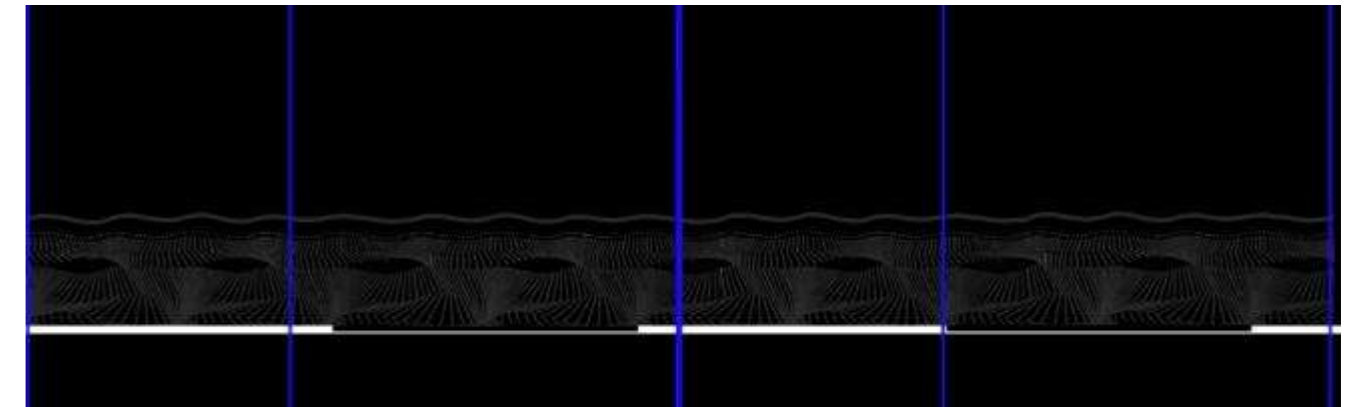
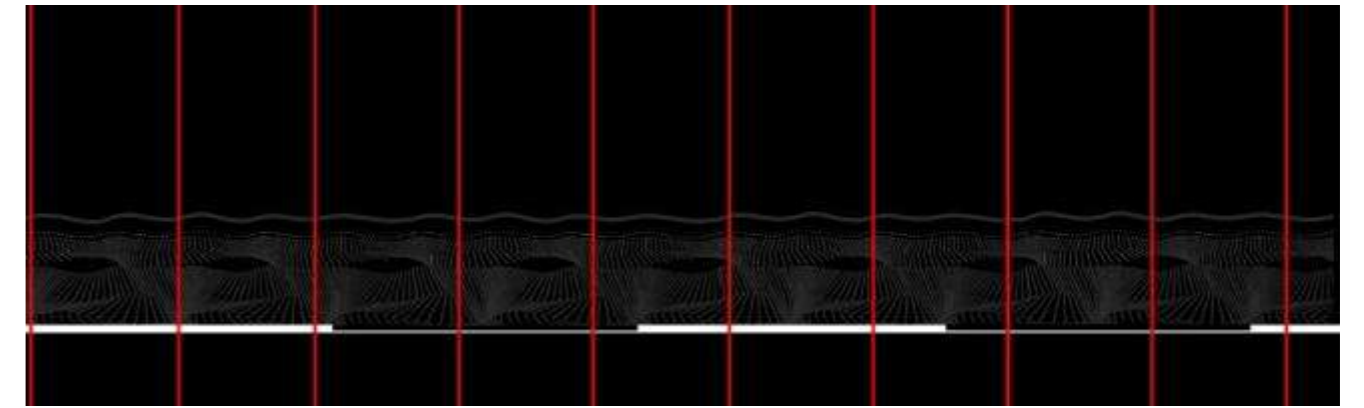
Claude Fayette Bragdon, A primer of higher space, 1972, p.14

Contamination of “reality”

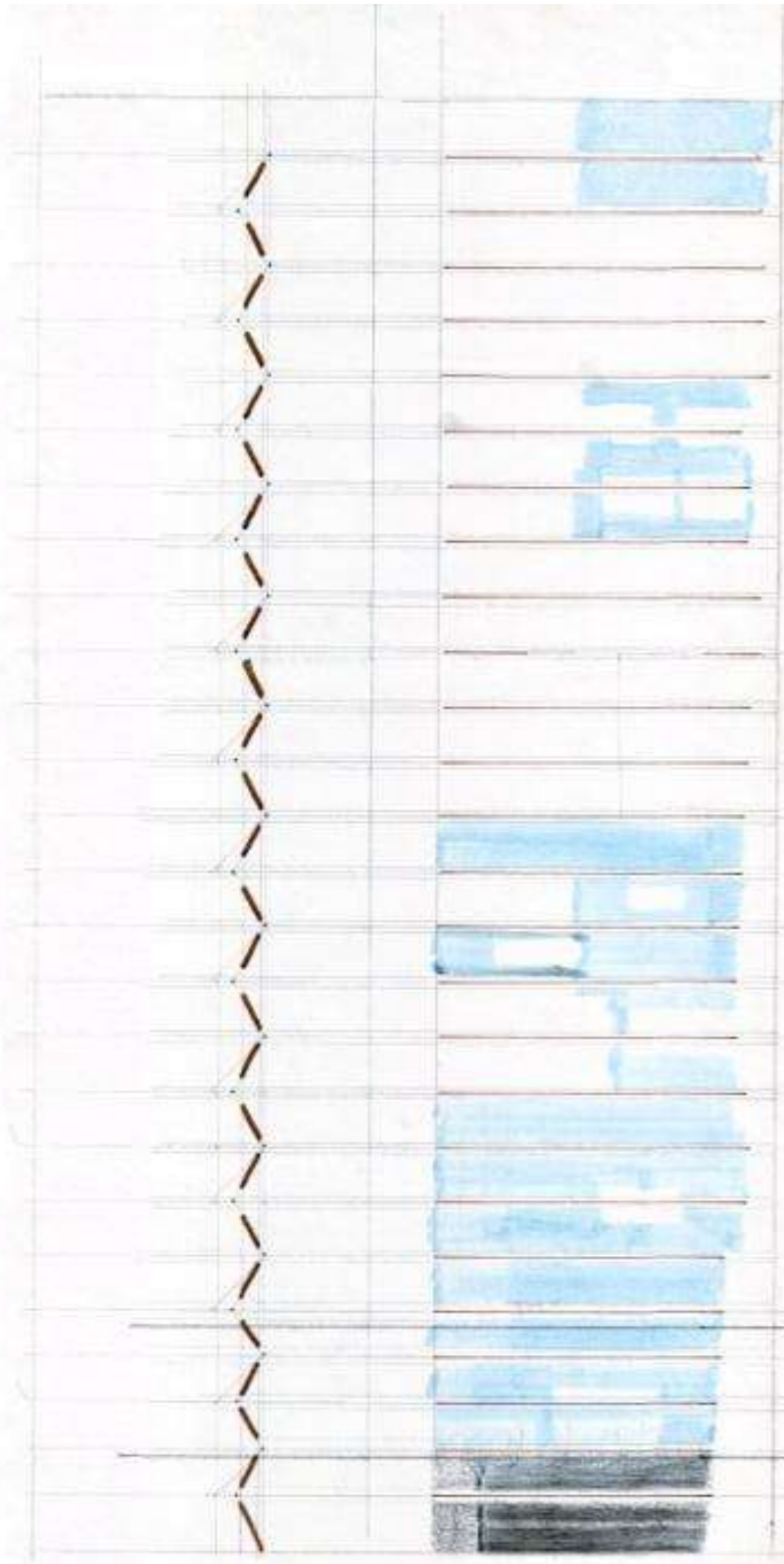
Merging the “real” and the “unreal”

Experiment A – wall of rhythms

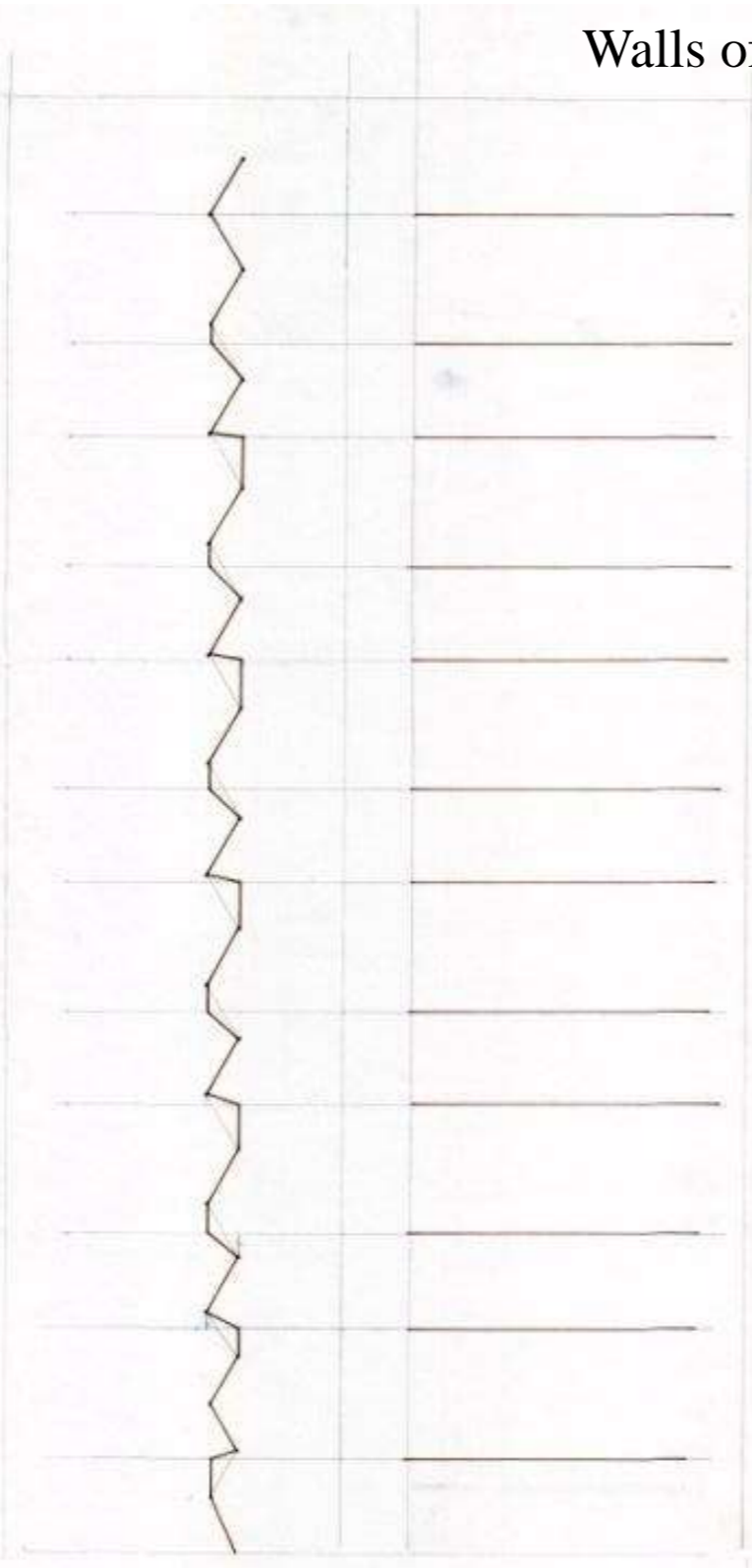
One of the earliest experiments I conducted to try and merge two realities together into a third reality was the wall of rhythms. While trying to understand the hidden forces that could be effecting our lives, I started to think about rhythm. Our hearts beat to a rhythm, our lungs expand and contract to a rhythm and while walking not only do our steps follow a rhythm but so does our field of vision as it shifts up and down with every pace. To the right is a documentation of these rhythms respectively from up to down. And since the “Child” character had decided at that time to walk down Ramsey’s ally it made sense to use the Alley's elevation as a backdrop , and to scale down the rhythms to fit a child’s. The different rhythms overlapping and meeting walls of different materials and heights resulted in the realization of a new wall that reflects the internal rhythms of a passing child while still maintaining its physical qualities.



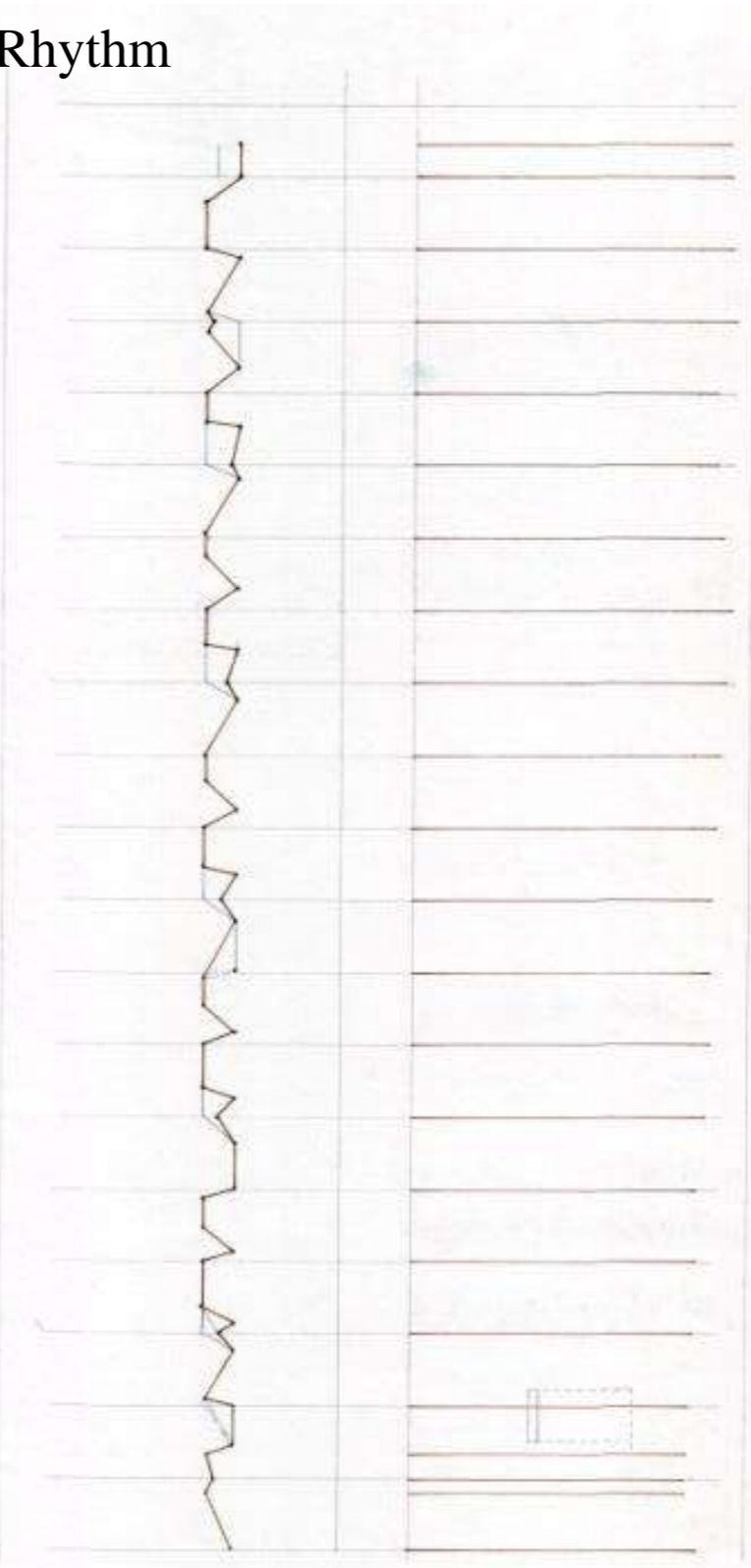
Walls of Rhythm



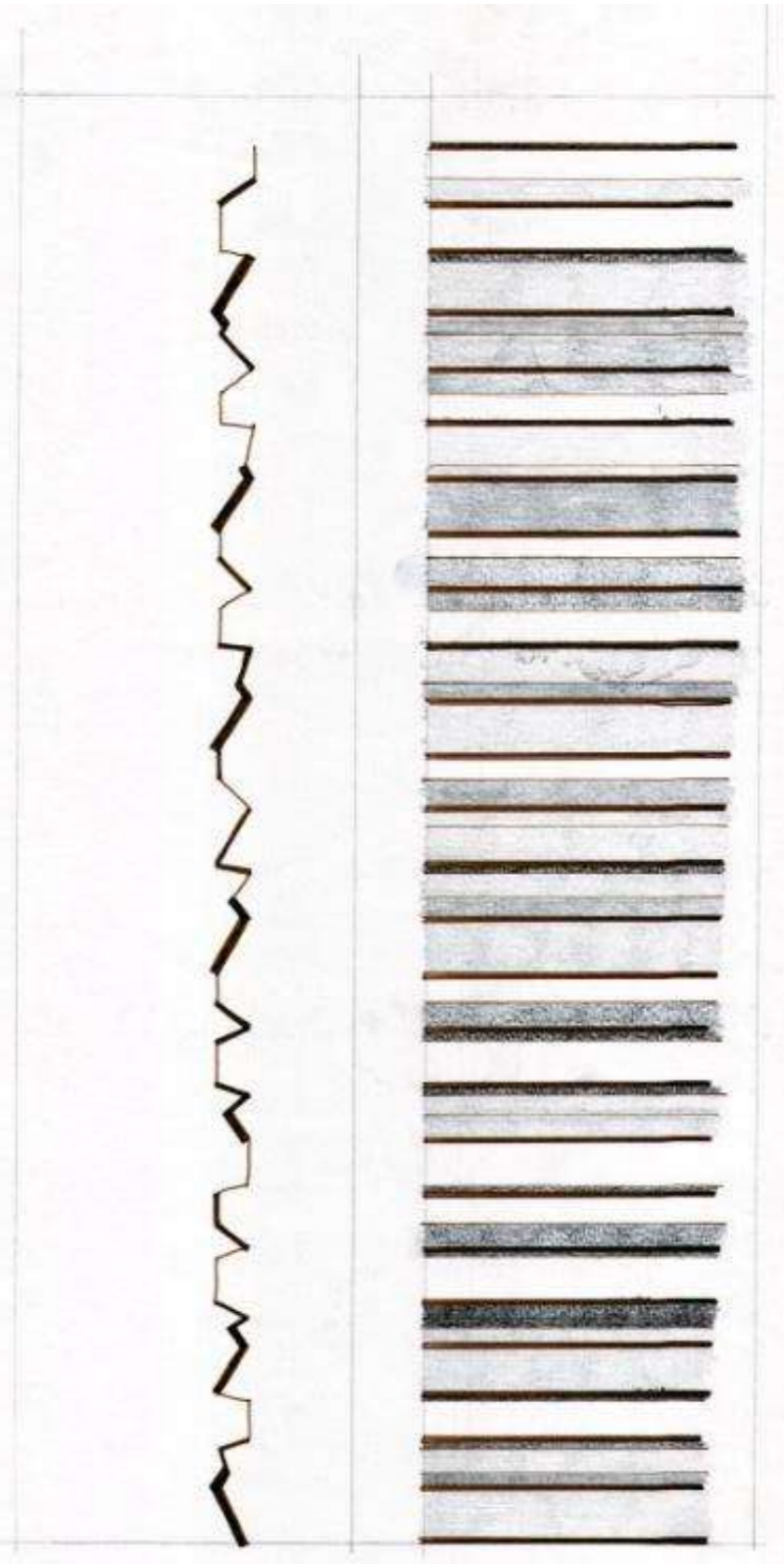
Heart Beats



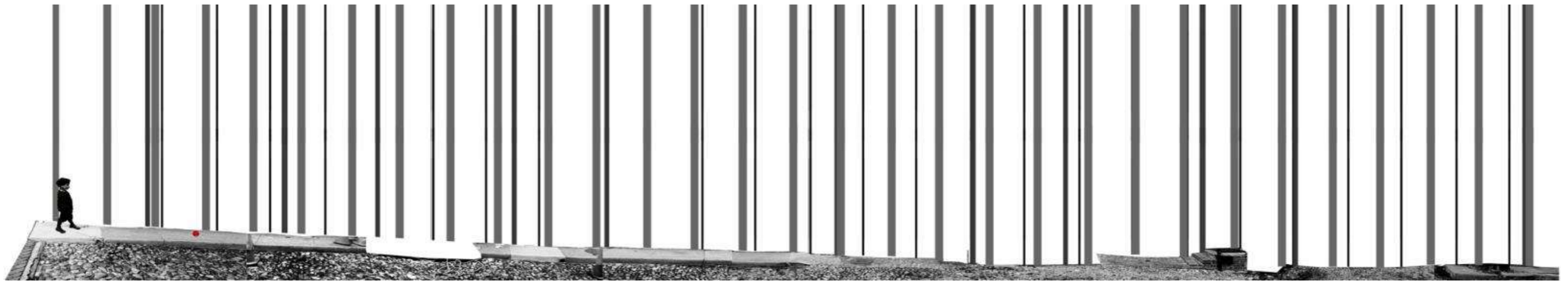
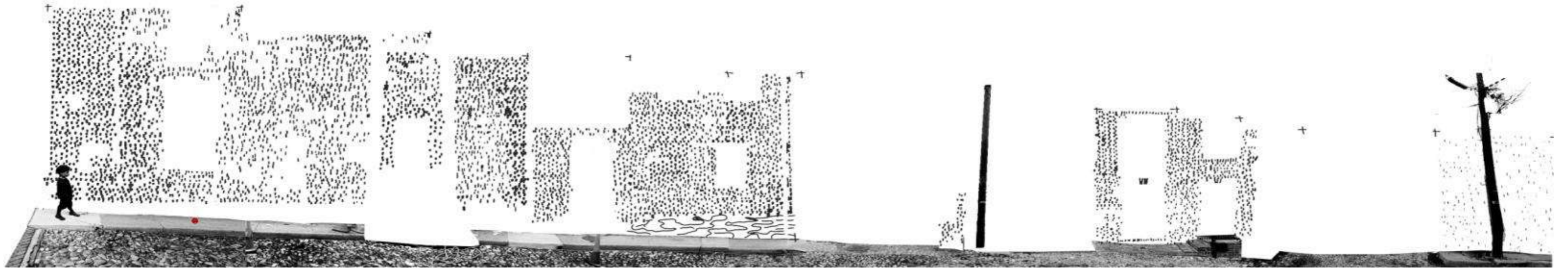
Heart Beats+Breaths



Heart Beats+Breaths+Steps



Heart Beats+Breaths+Steps+Eye Level



Wall of Rhythms

"All means are sacred which are called for by the inner need. All means are sinful which obscure that inner need."

Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*, 1977, p.35

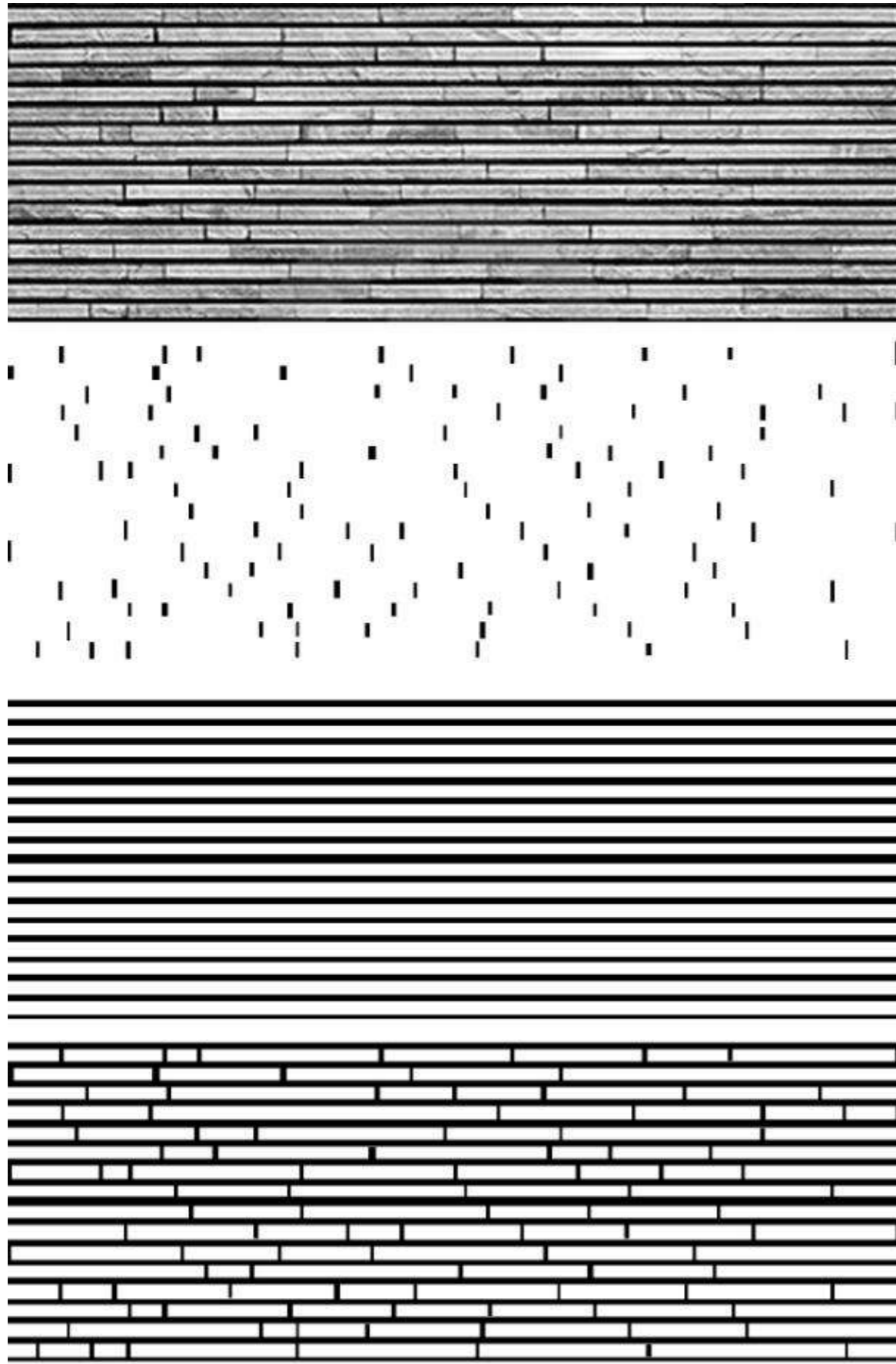
Contamination of “reality”

Merging the “real” and the “unreal”

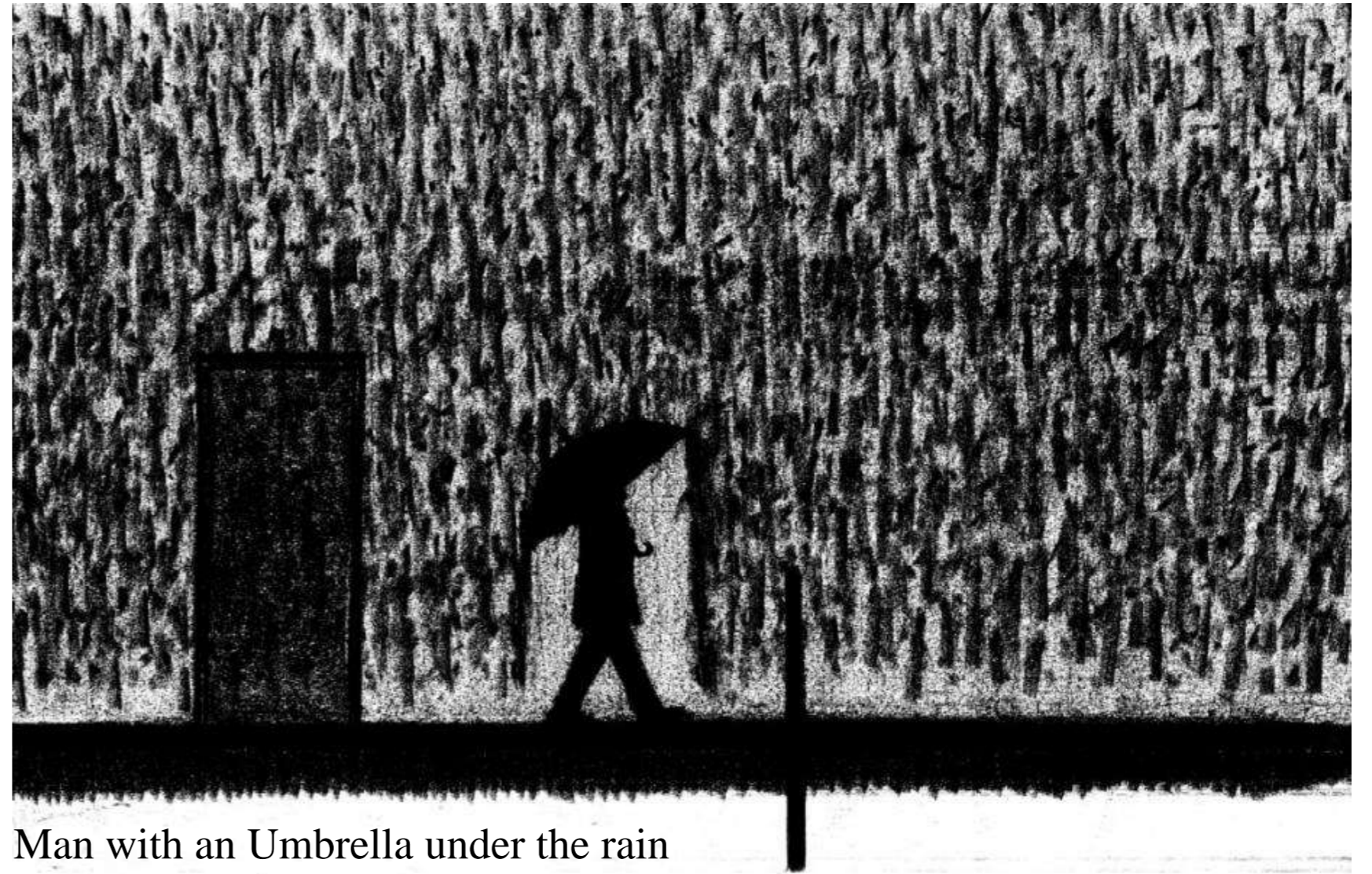
Experiment B – The Guardian

Just like the “child” was making his way down Ramsey's alley, the “man with an umbrella” was walking up Fairfax street and was about to pass by where the animation studio’s main façade would be. It was a rainy night and the man was suddenly stopped by a giant woman whose right arm reached out and had a very serious look on her face. She seemed to be the guardian of the building, the building which still did not materialize. This scene came to me as a series of mind flashes while I was fully awake, it was so vivid and persistent. I broke the scene down into its main elements; night, rain, man with an umbrella, woman, face, arm. Then I tried to find similarities and connections between these “unreal” elements and the “real” elements from the site in order to recreate this “unreal” scene in the “real” world. The falling rain resembled the brick bonds, the guardian’s protruding nose resembled a cantilevered balcony and the guardian’s arm reaching out to stop the man resembled an arm pushing open a door.

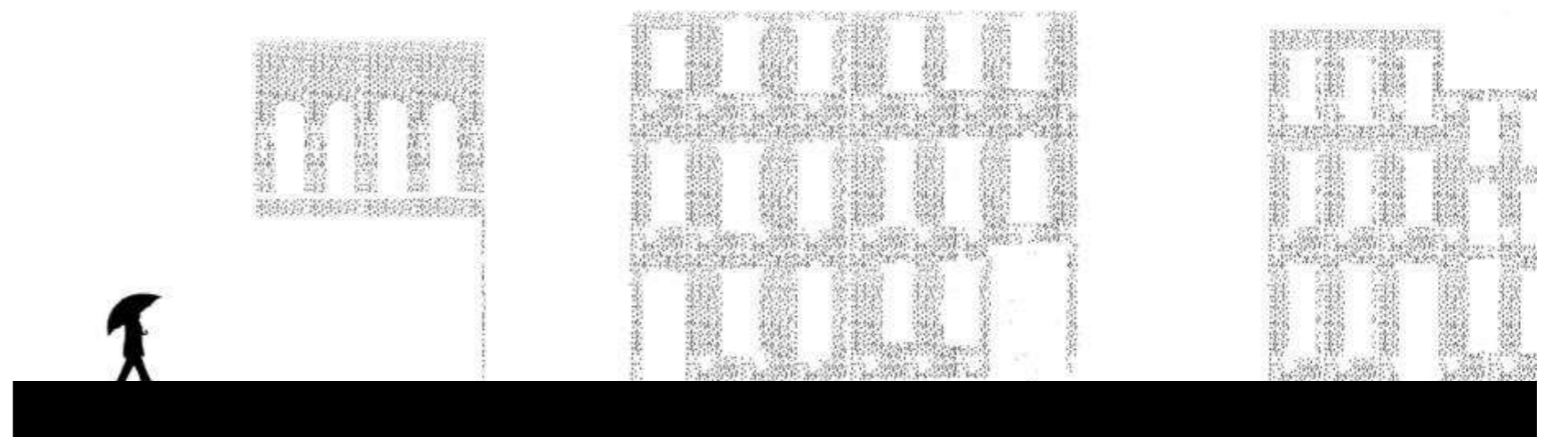




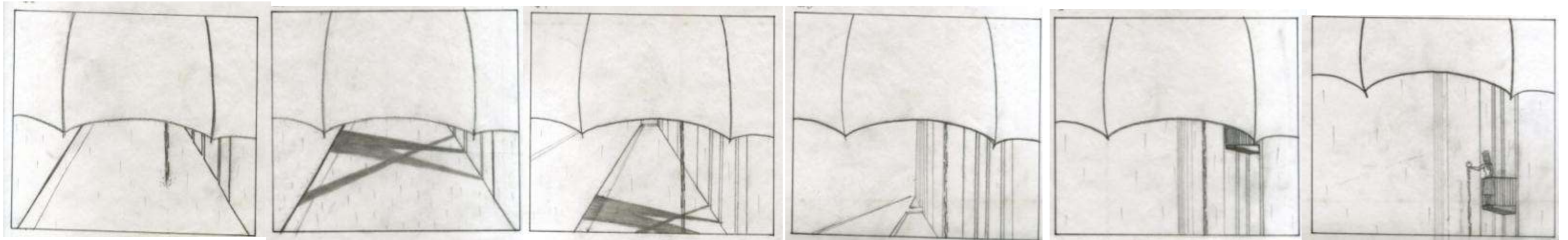
Brick bond split into horizontal and vertical line



Man with an Umbrella under the rain



Brick bond's vertical lines resembling rain fall

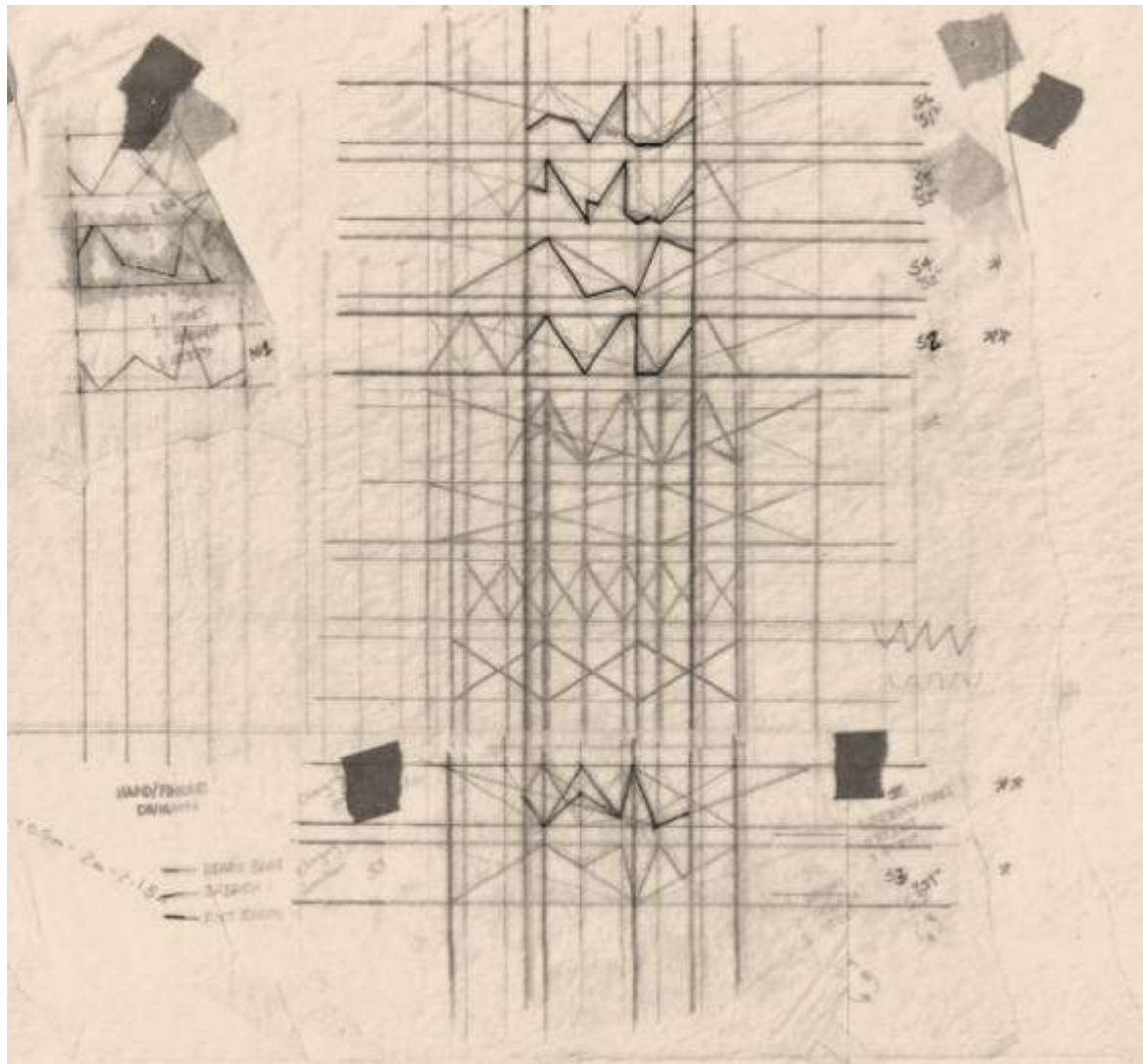
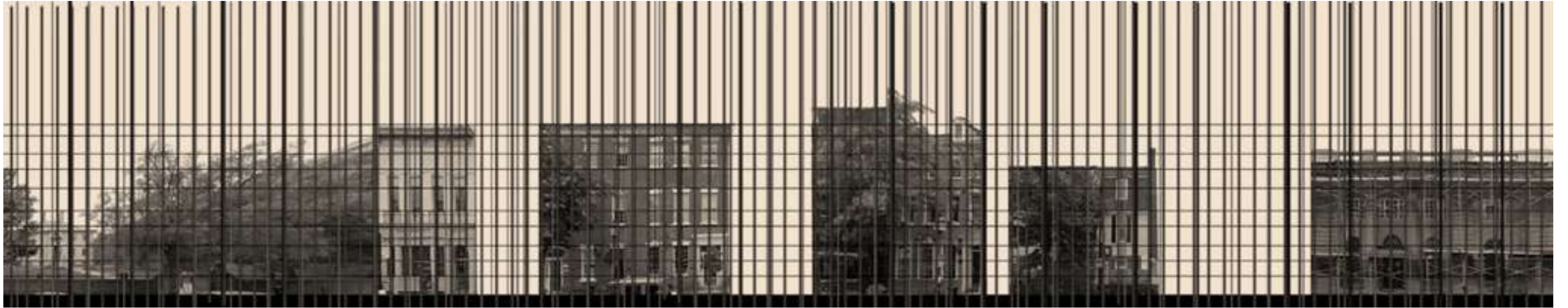


The story told through the eyes of the Man with an Umbrella



Dark room experiments to recreate the scene of the guardian looking down under the rain





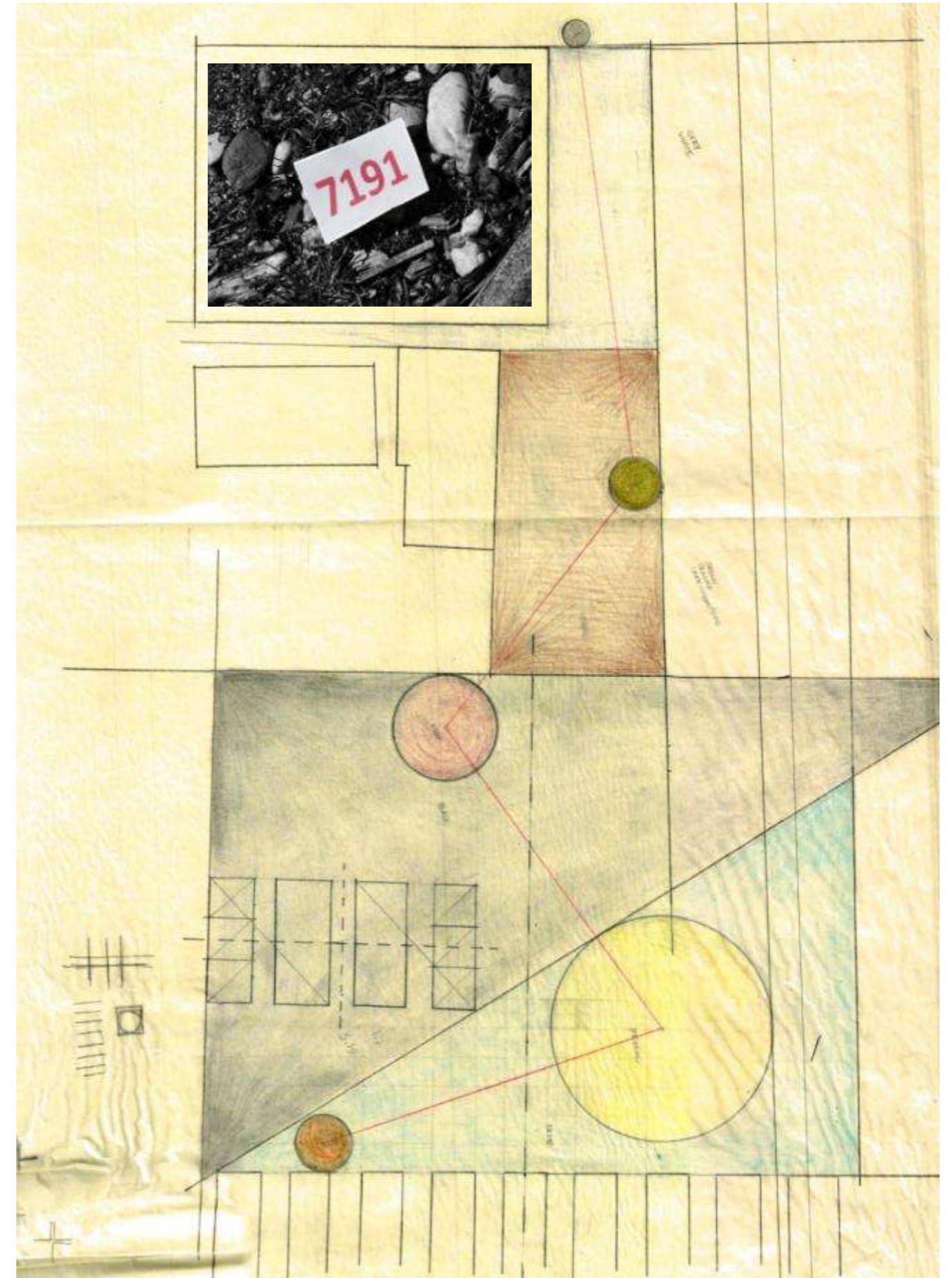
Rhythms applied to the west elevation

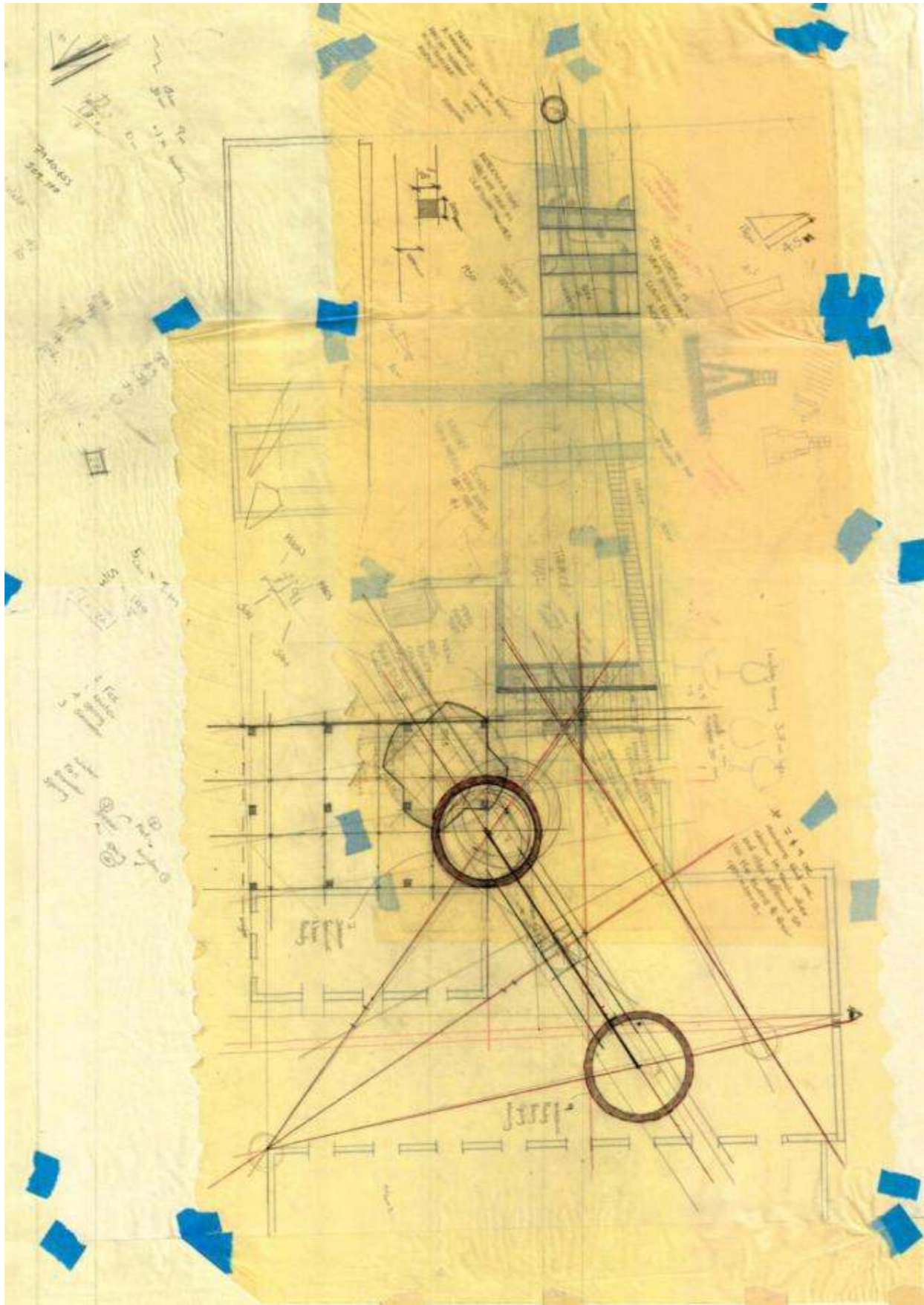
**" Everything in life is an omen ... There is a universal language,
understood by everybody, but already forgotten "**

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*, 1992, p.38

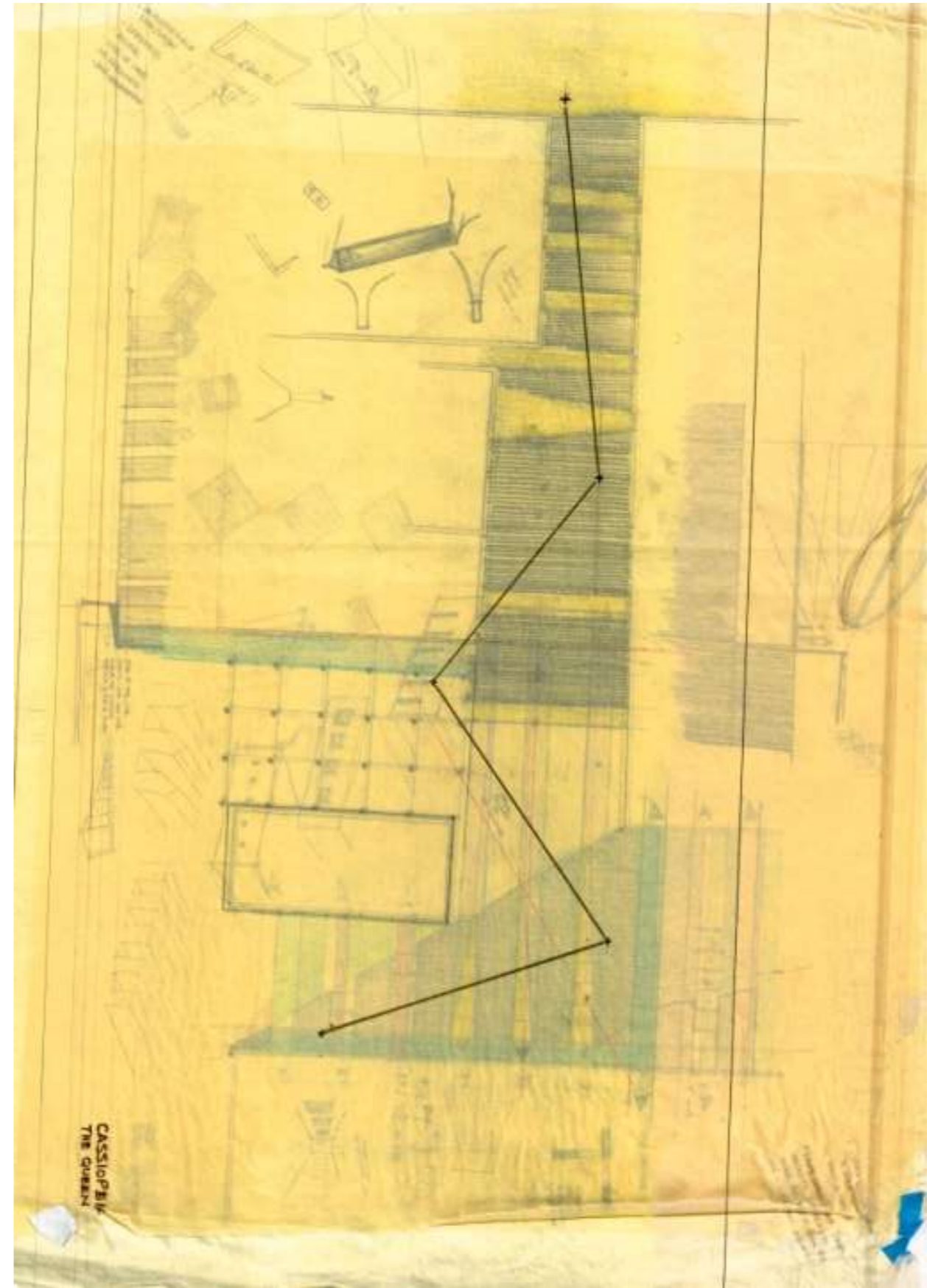
Luck and Coincidence

The merging of the “real” and the “unreal” seemed to have triggered a series of intriguing coincidences, odd alignments, numerical consistencies and geometrical patterns through out the design process. These coincidences took place on the pages of my sketchbook, the drafting board, the computer screen , my dreams and my “reality”. Early in the design stage I had decided to create four towers, one tower for each character located within each character’s division of the site. One major coincidence was realizing that the location of the four towers on the drawings are almost identical to the locations of the stars of the “Cassiopeia” constellation, also known as “the queen”. Another coincidence is that the original positioning of the towers was partially determined using the numerical relations derived from the number “7191” which I found written in red ink on a small piece of paper during a site visit.





Site development resembling the “Cassiopeia” constellation



“Cassiopeia” constellation laid over the site

"Luck and coincidence. It's with those words that the universal language is written."

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*, 1992, p.38

A common frame was needed to hold all the various elements from both worlds together, since they all seemed isolated and fragmented so far. Given that each mind flash, dream and site visit came with several clues, signs and omens and that each character presented itself with specific traits, behaviors and actions. It seemed that this frame could be a cohesive story line that combines the clues, signs and omens of both worlds with the traits, behaviors and actions of the four characters that are now, in a way, inhabiting both worlds.

The Story

The Man with an Umbrella walks on a rainy winter night

The Old Man watches a dry Fall sunset

The Queen waits on a hot summer noon

The Child plays on a breezy spring morning

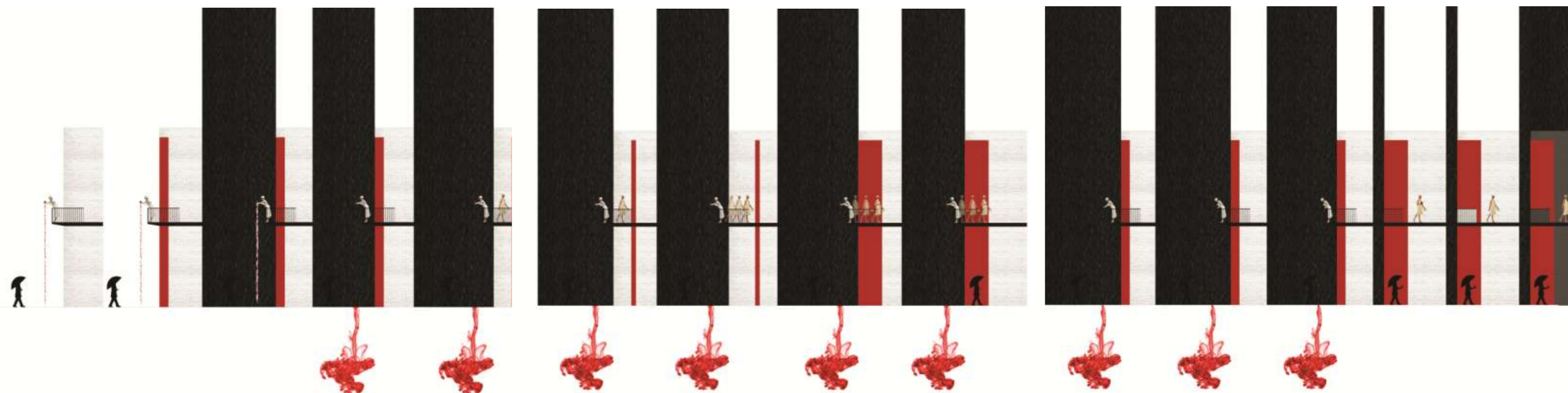
The Apple falls far from a tree

For the seasons to change the apple must be passed from the hands of one character to the next in the order above. Each character inhabits a specific territory of the site which would later develop into the different departments of the animation studio. The Apple must be passed during the time of day assigned to each character and exactly where each character crosses the threshold that marks the end of their territory and the beginning of the next character's territory.

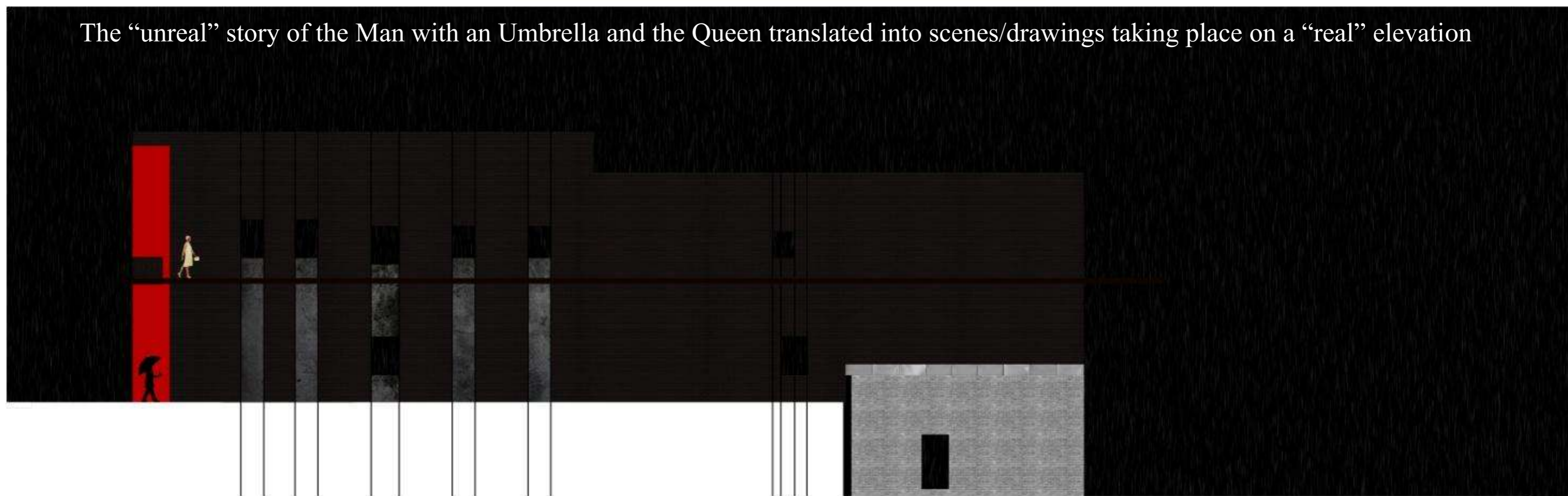
Man with an Umbrella

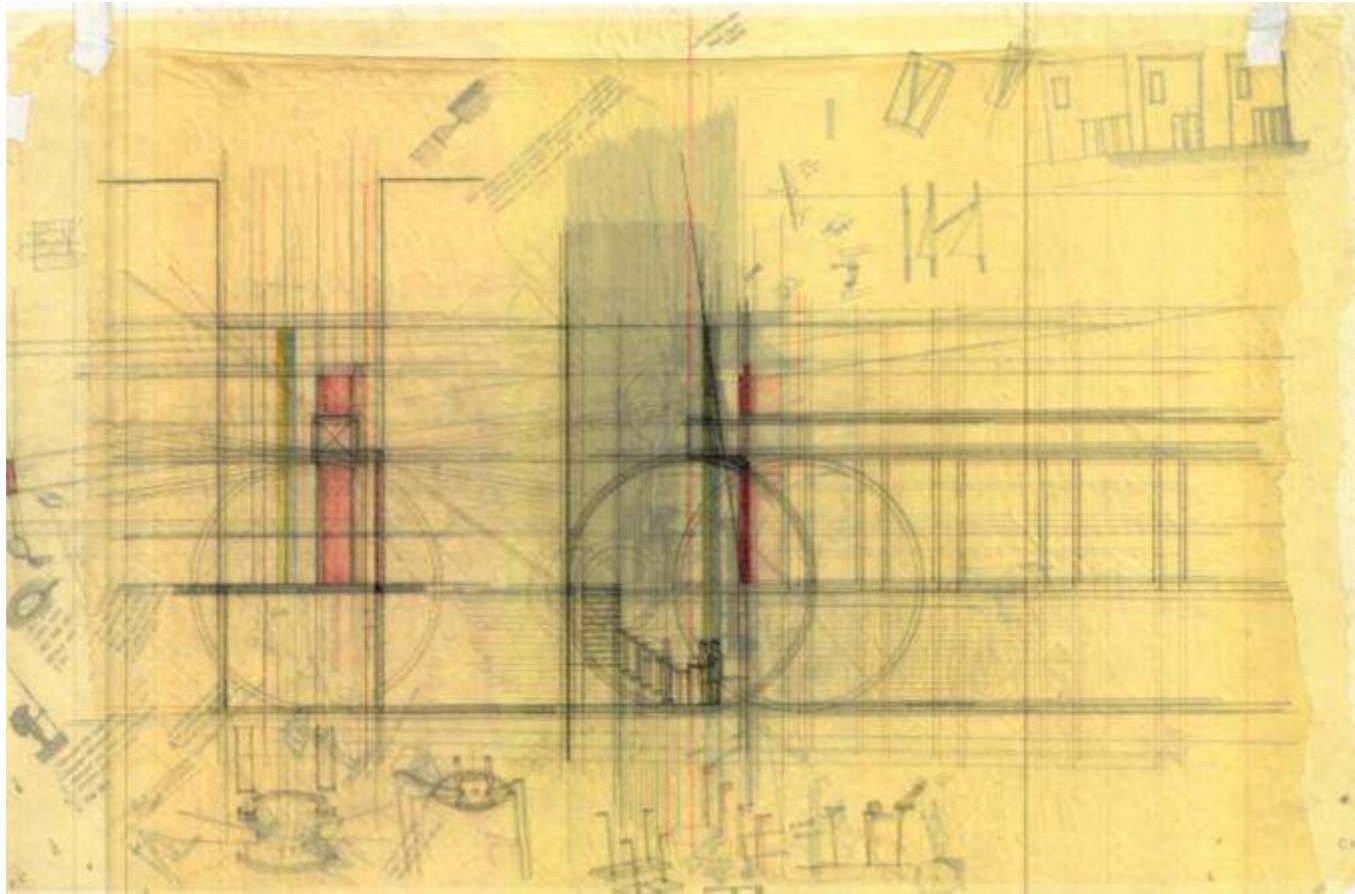
This is where the story begins, it is also where the main entrance is. The Man with an Umbrella was walking the wet streets of Old Town one night, with the umbrella blocking most of his view, a continuous line of water pouring from above caught his sight. He looked up and saw a lady in red, washing an apple under the rain with her right arm extended. She stood in a small balcony cantilevered just like her arm, she looked down at the man and faintly smiled. Suddenly, the apple was dropped and in the Man's hand it came to an abrupt halt. The apple was passed from the hands of the Queen to the hands of the Man. Therefore, it is now Winter, the Queen turned around pushed the door open from above and allowed the Man to enter. Then she walked across the bridge above with grace and below he hastily followed the path while listening to her pace. At the end of the bridge above she disappeared into a door, he was faced with three doors down below.



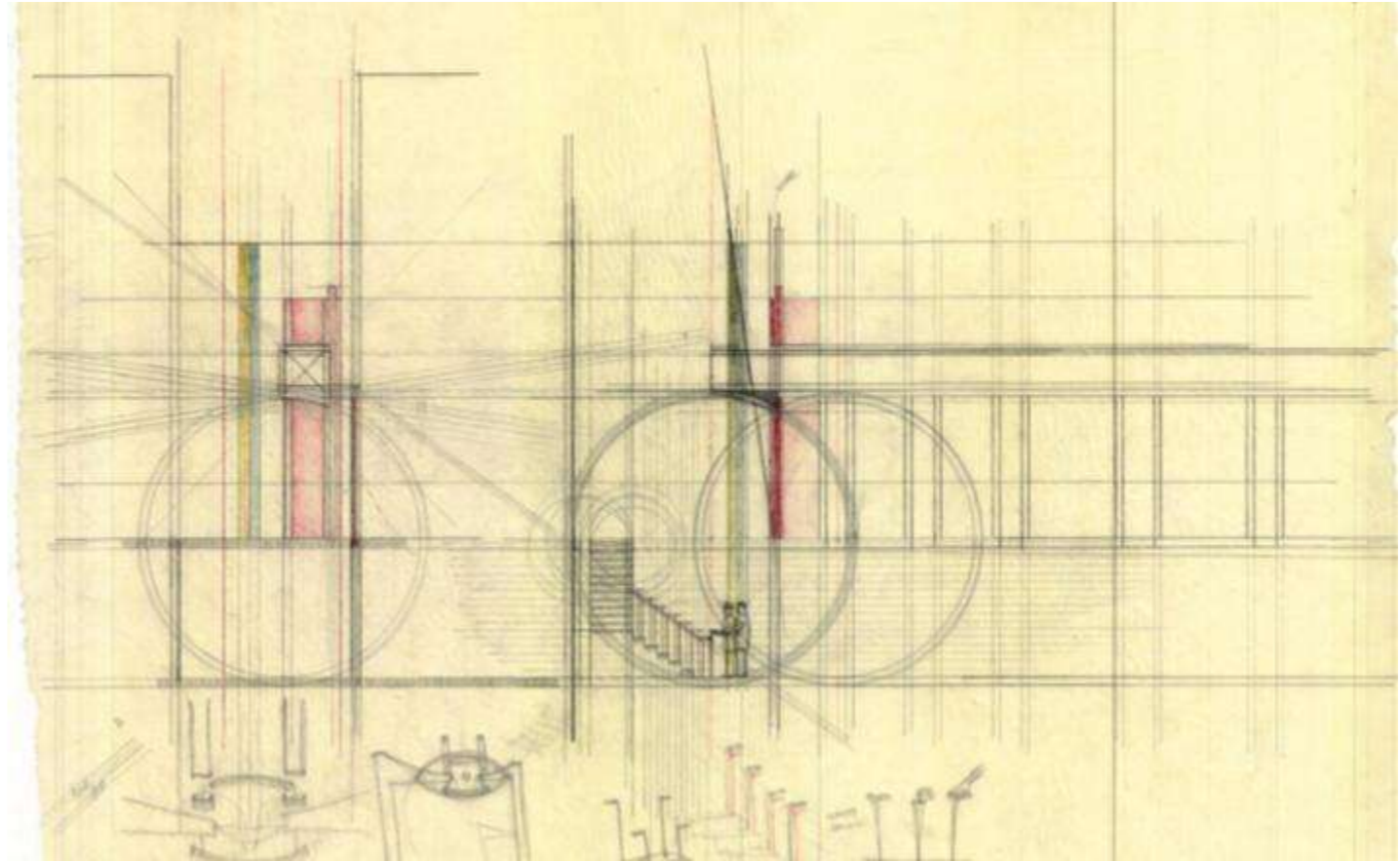


The “unreal” story of the Man with an Umbrella and the Queen translated into scenes/drawings taking place on a “real” elevation

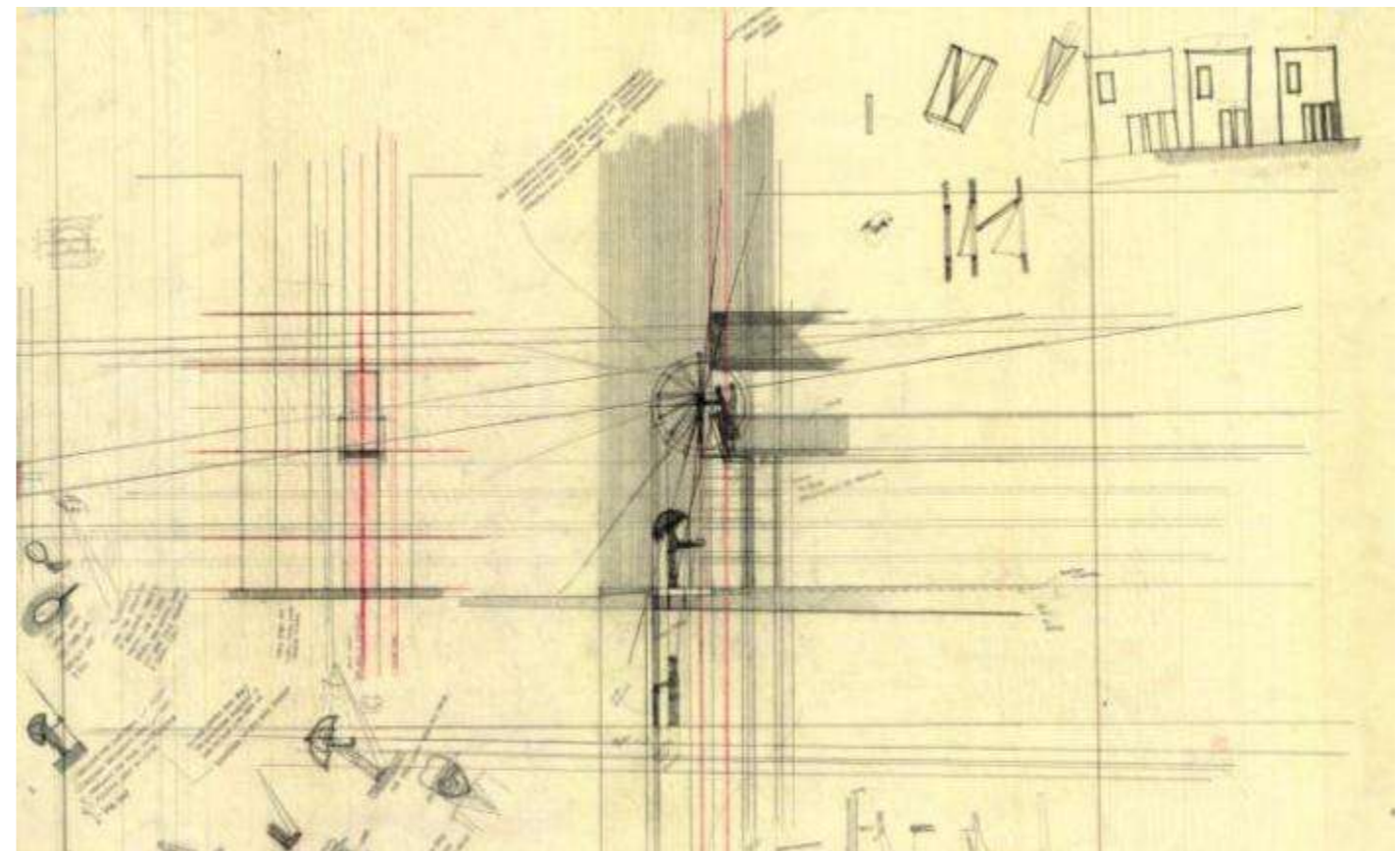
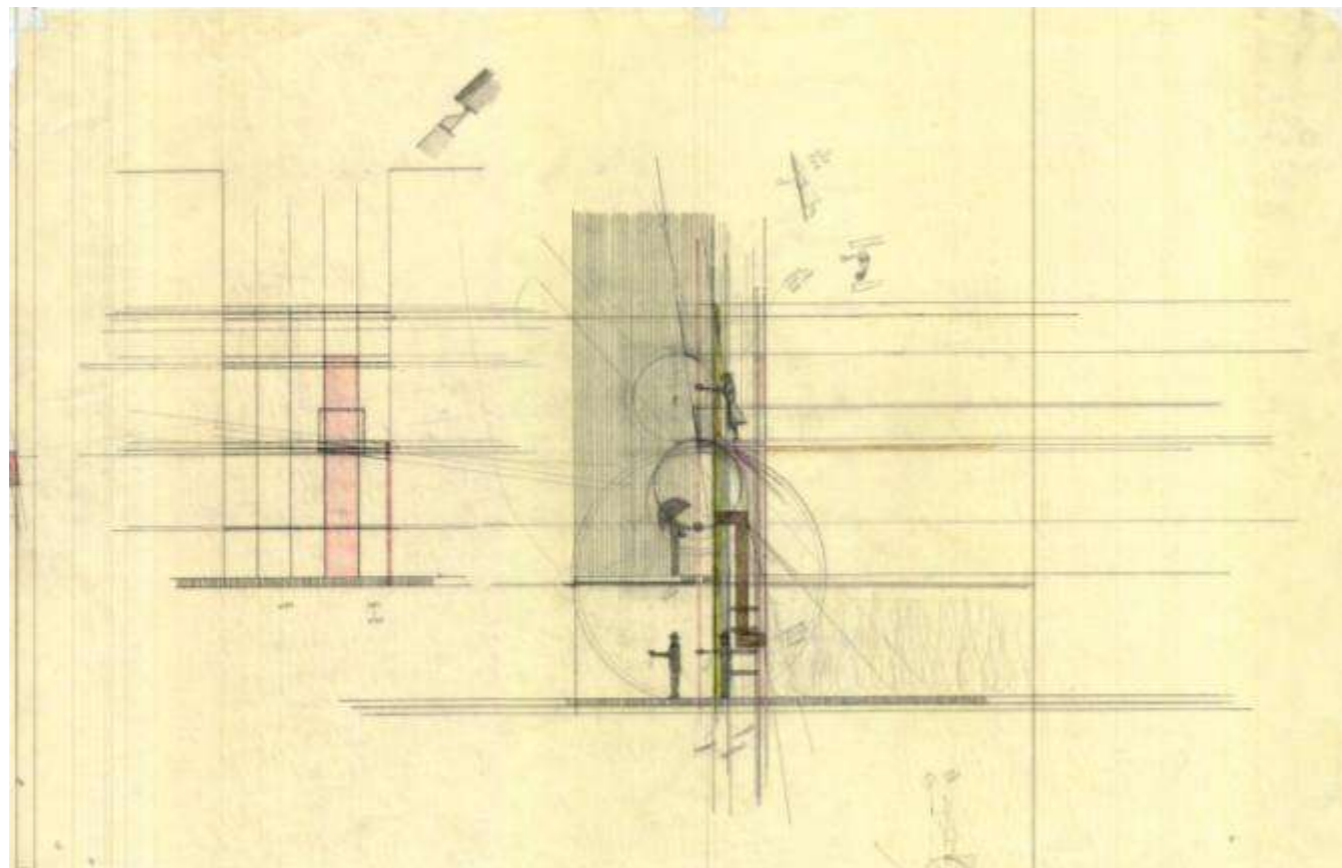


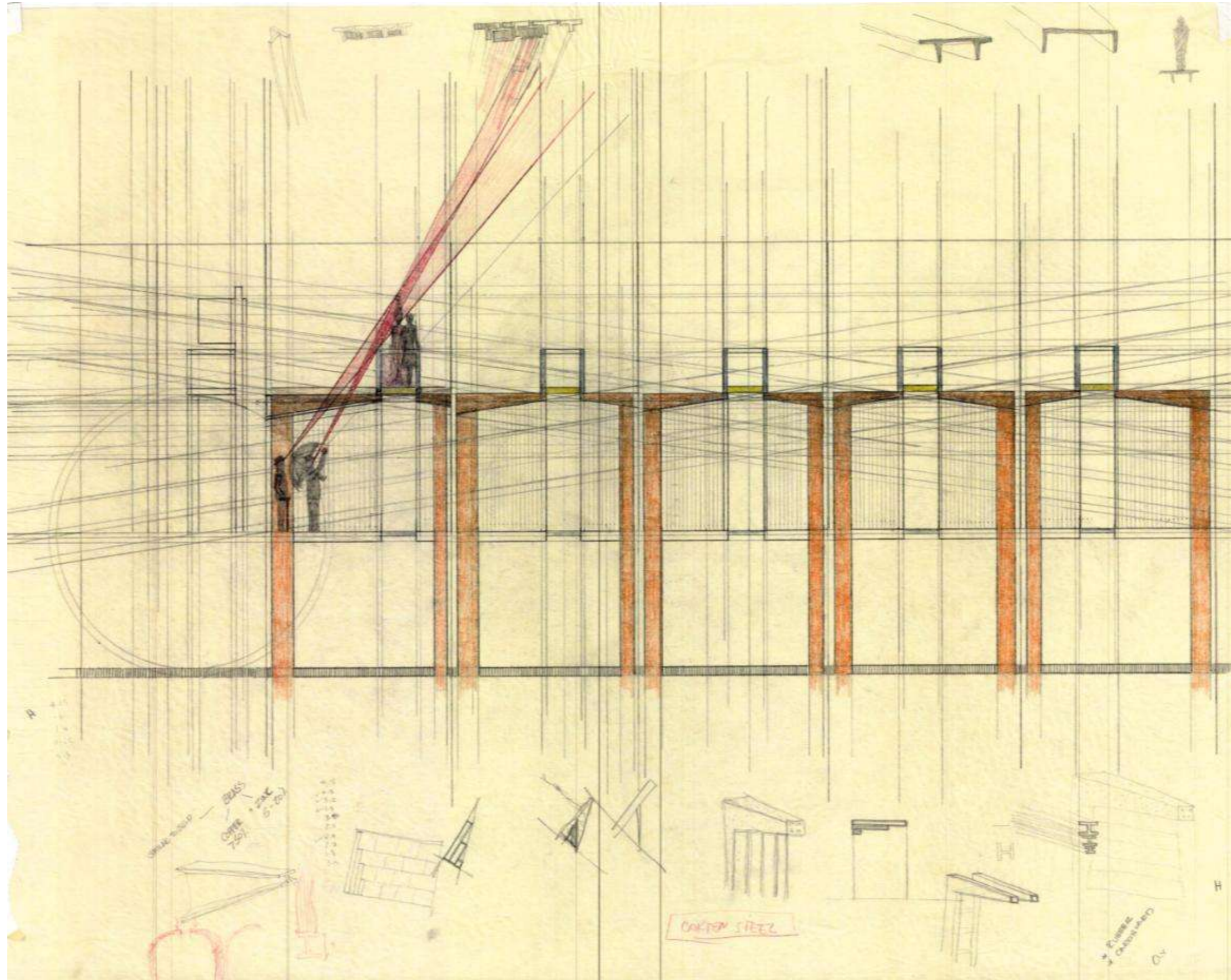


Section and elevation of the first scene of story

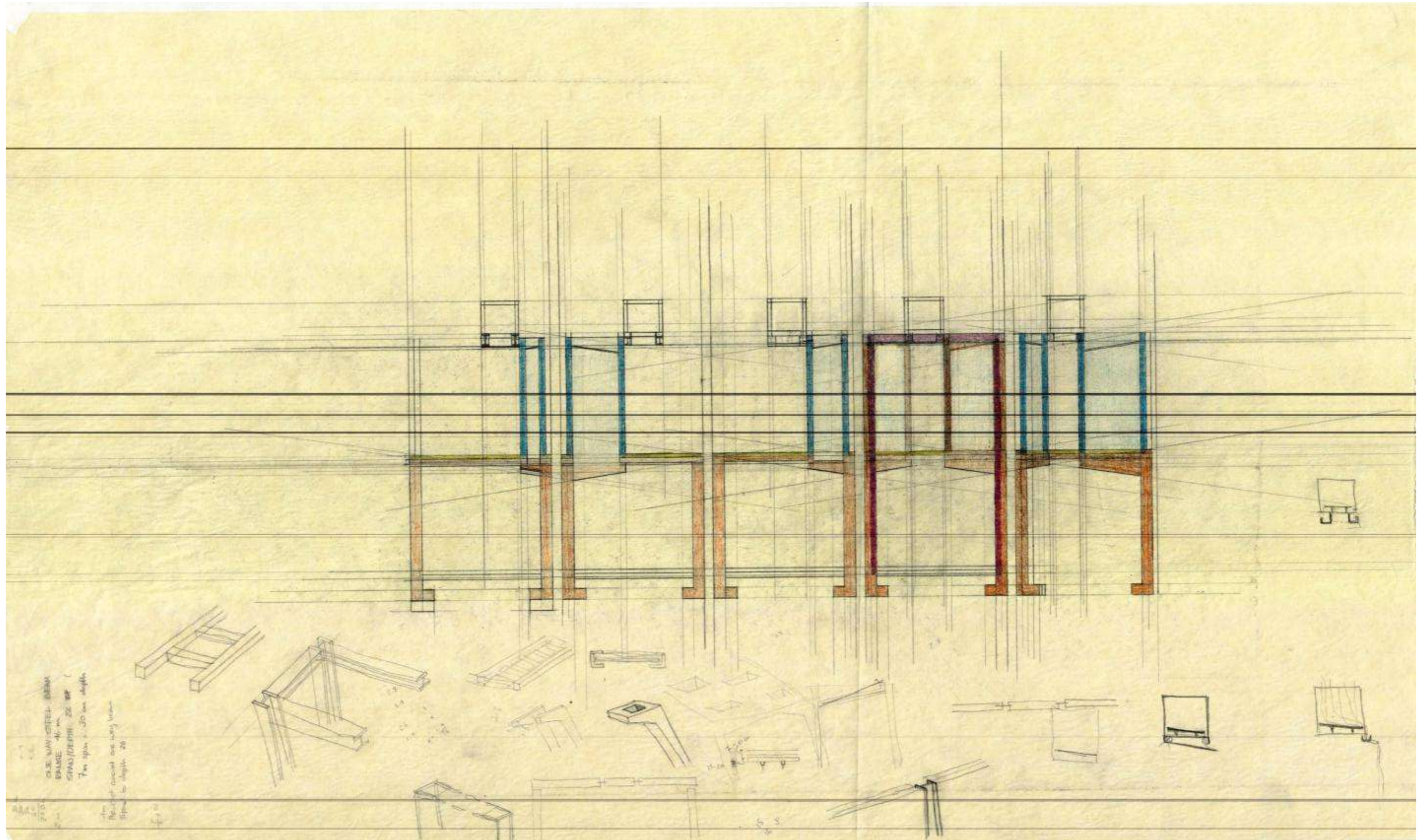


Section and elevation of the first scene of story

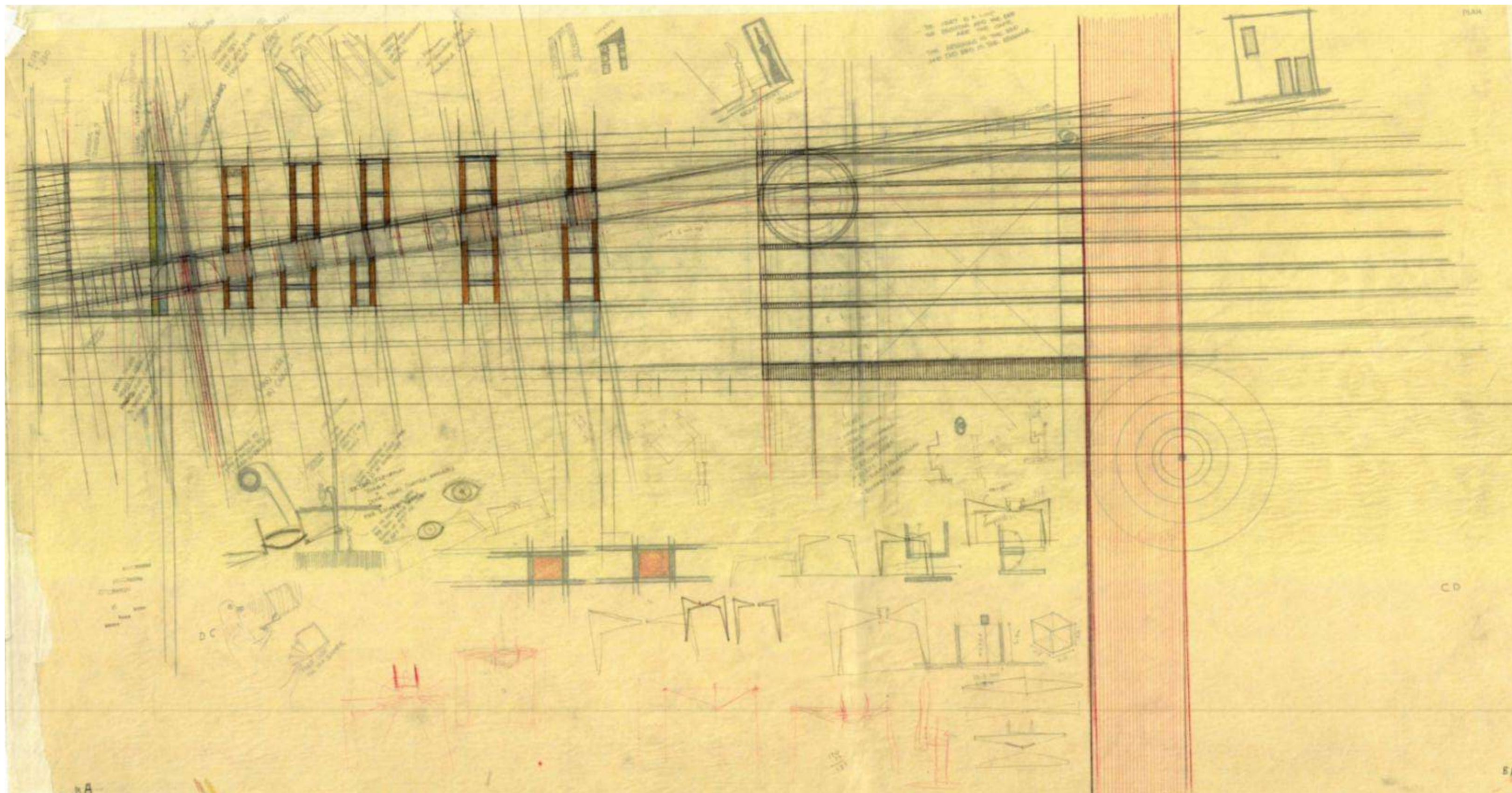




Multiple sections of the bridge and gates structure



Section and elevation of the first scene of story



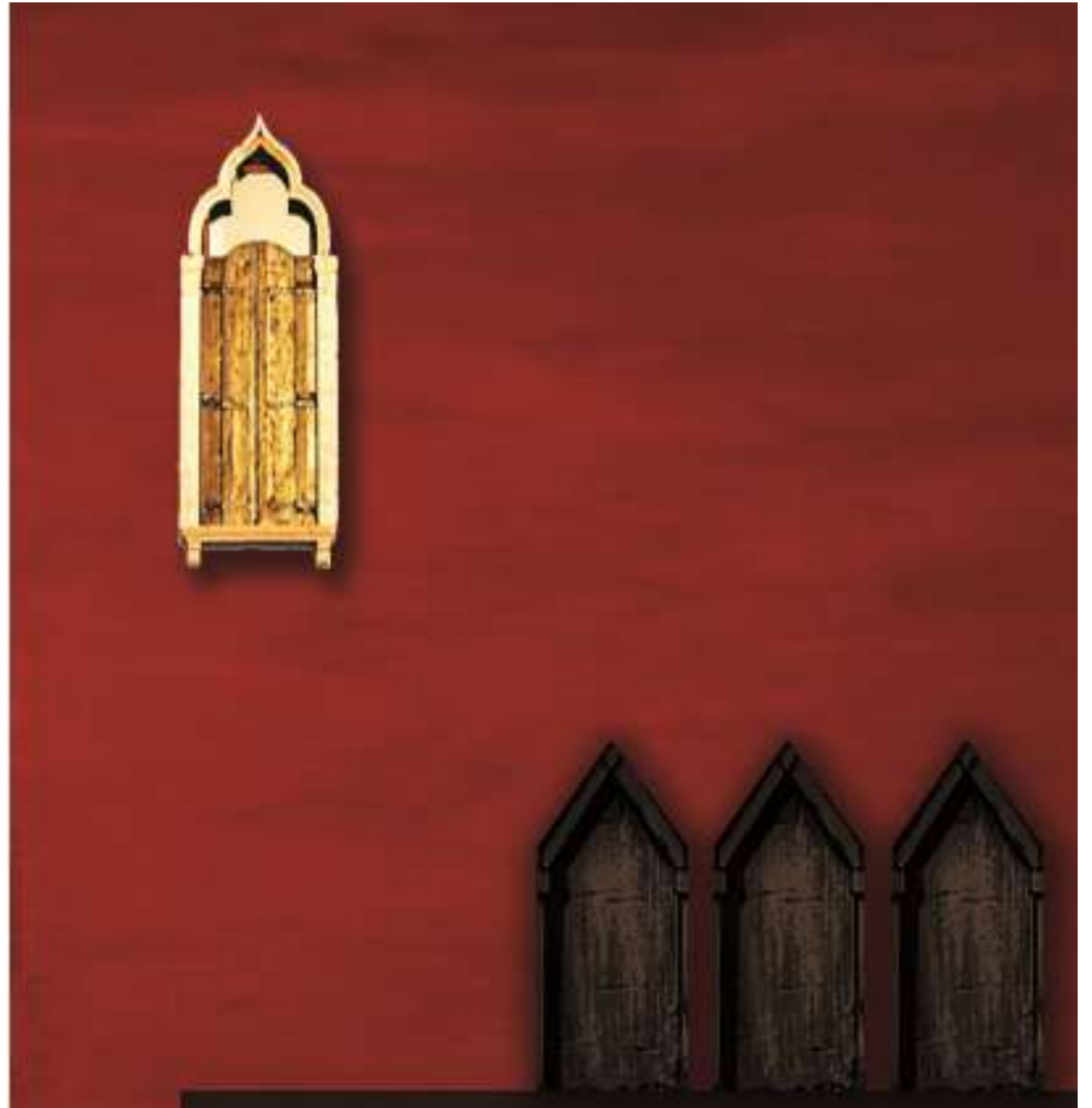
Schematic plan of the bridge and gates area

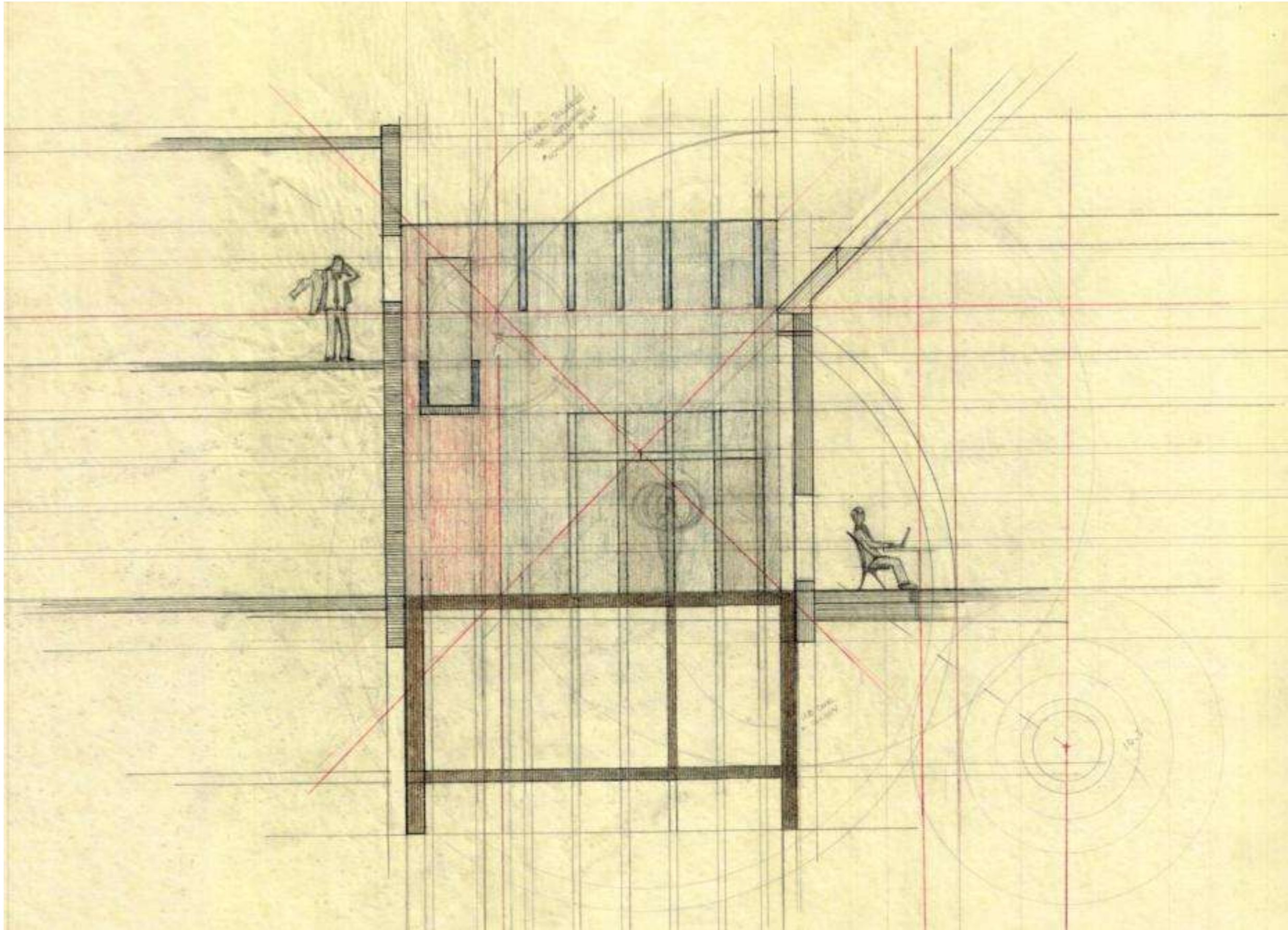
"All of us stood between two worlds: the world of external perception and the world of the unconscious"

Carl Gustav Jung, *The Red Book*, from a paper titled "On the Unconscious", 1918, p.57

Old Man

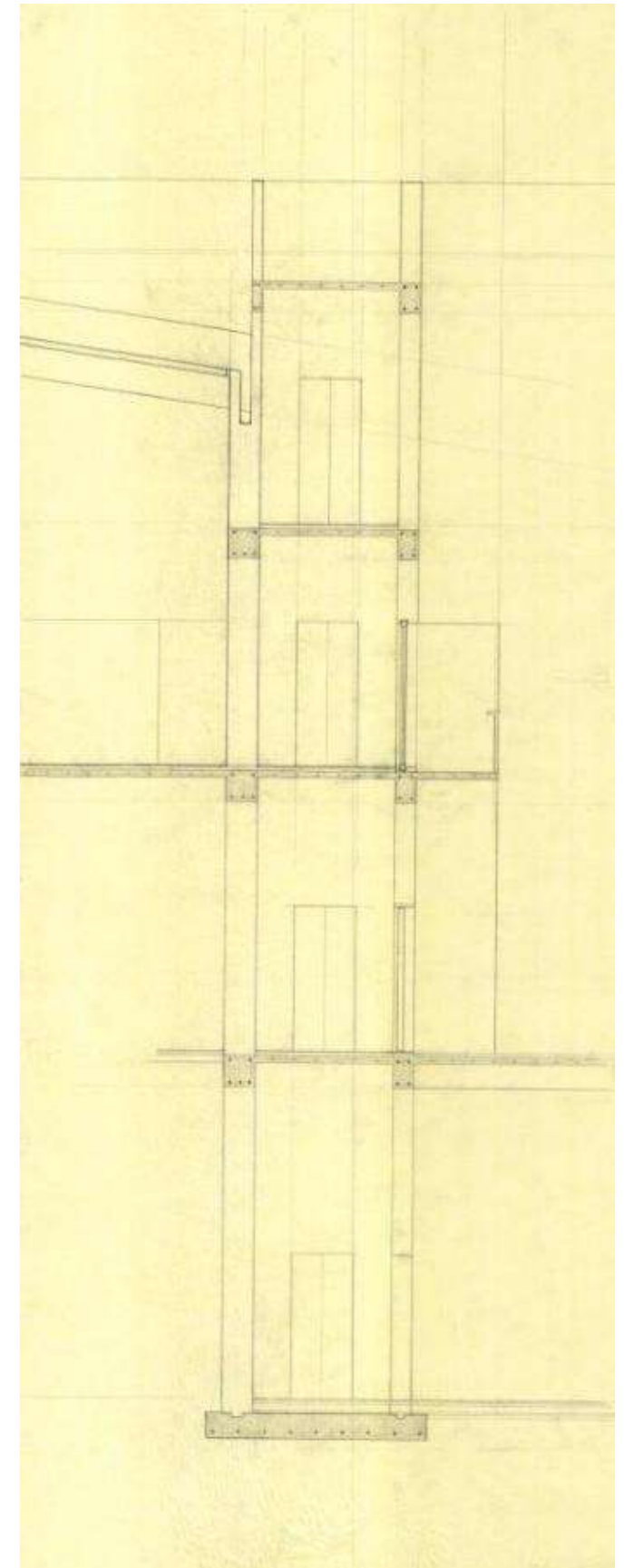
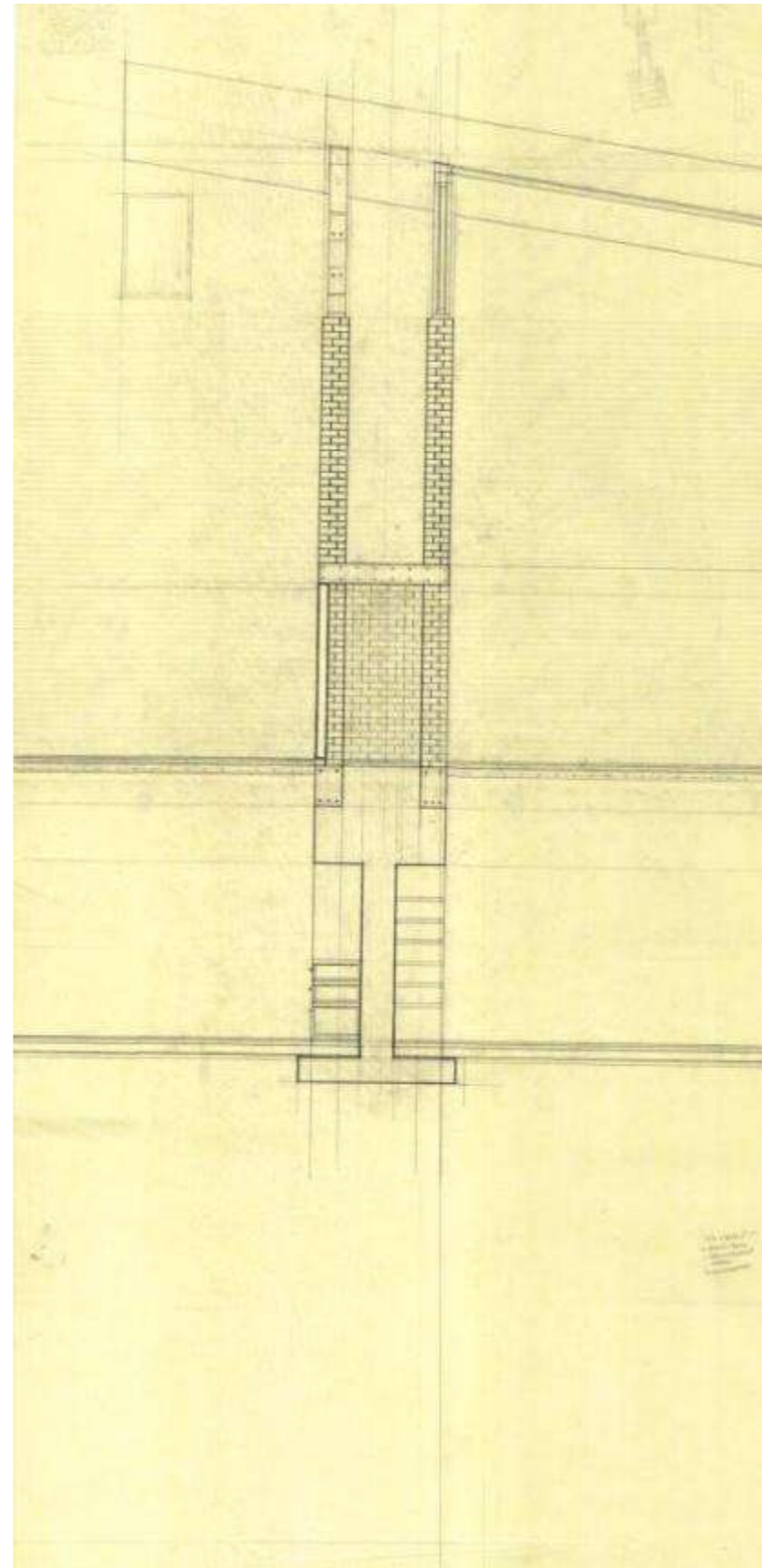
Now the young Man with an Umbrella was facing a red brick wall with three identical doors, each door was topped with one of three identical lintels. He had to make a choice and enter through only one door. He could not waste anytime and had to make his final choice now. He decided to choose the left door, maybe because it was the closest one! The door had no knobs nor handles it could only be pushed open. The young Man was very anxious, he pushed and pushed but all he saw was another brick wall, this thick brick wall held the doors and marked the threshold between the two zones. After few long seconds the door finally revealed the hall behind and as the man crossed the threshold and was now inside the rain suddenly decided to stop. It was now the time for fall.



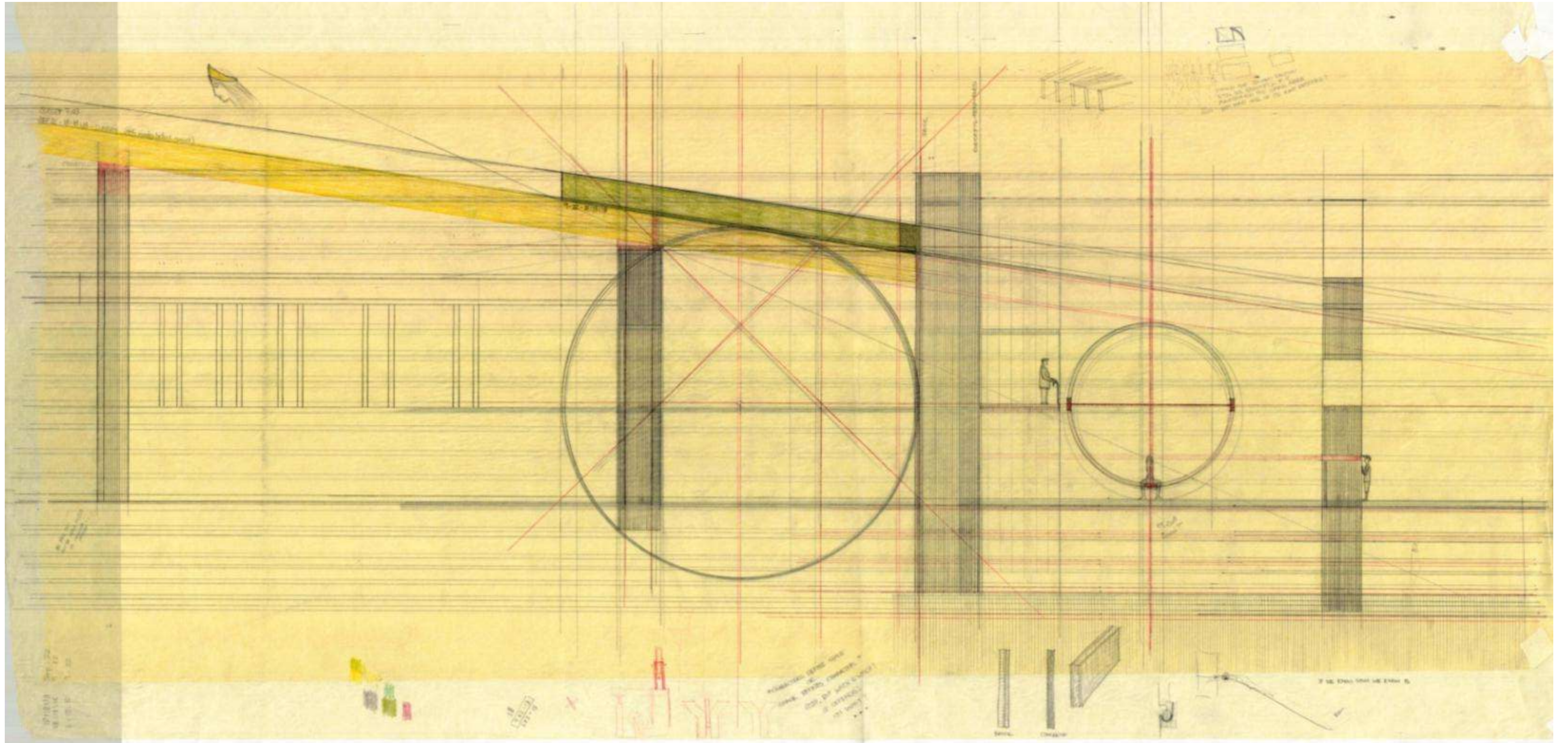


Early elevation of main hall

The young Man closed his umbrella as the door behind him closed. He was inside a big open hall with sun light coming from above through the glass panes mounted in-between the deep wooden beams. He looked around but could not find the Queen anywhere, he did not realize at the time that she had taken the secret spiral staircase down to the level below. In front of him he saw a small glass door that lead to a balcony, the parallel beams above persuaded him to follow them and walk towards the door. But with every step he took he felt weaker and his legs felt heavier, by the time he arrived at the glass door he was so frail that he was using his umbrella as a cane. He caught his reflection on the glass and to his shock he was no longer a young man, he was now old. His transformation was so great that the once perfectly horizontal roof beams now rest at an angle against the wall. And the Old Man realized that there was nothing that could be done now.



Detail sections of front and back walls of main hall



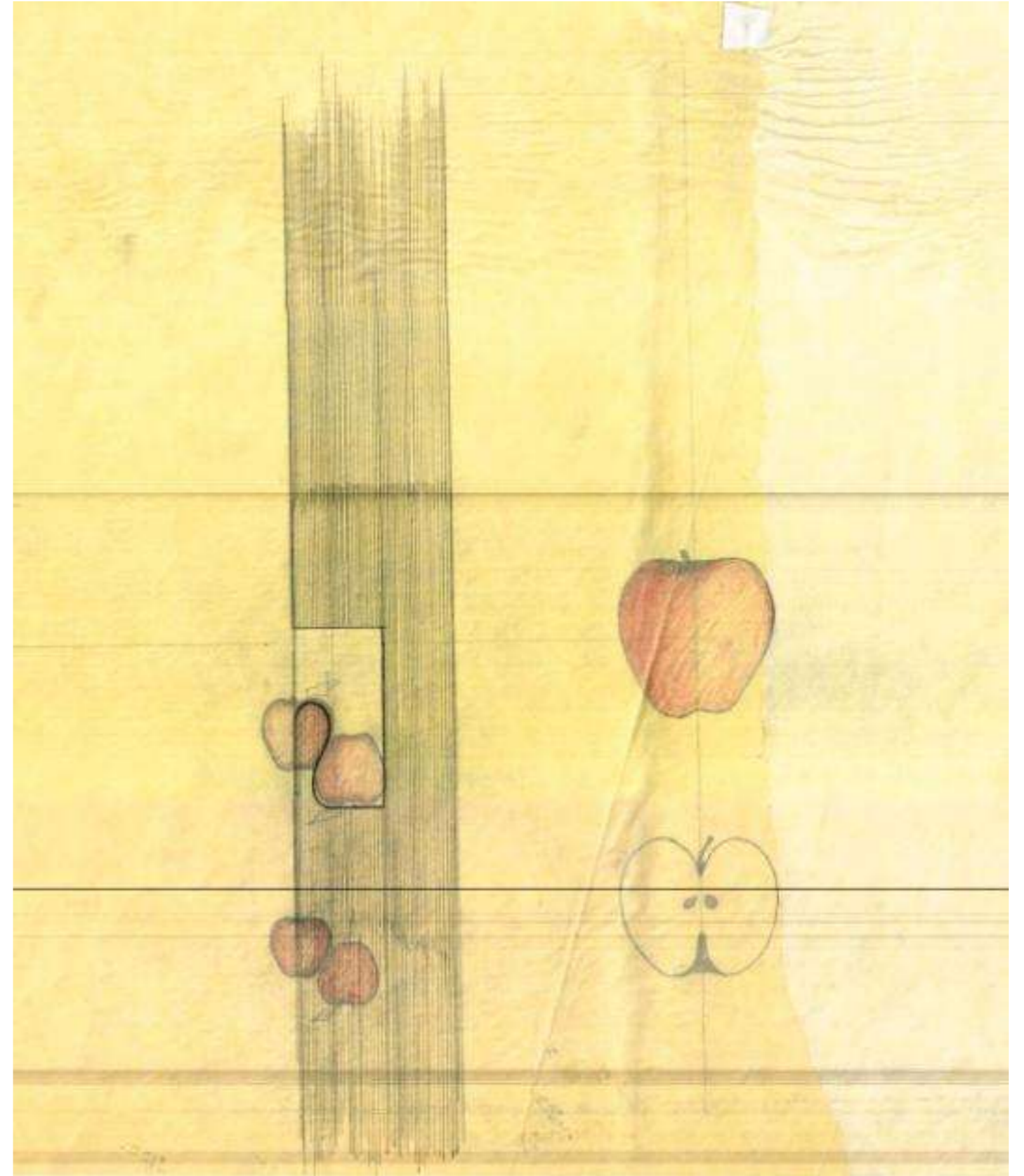
Schematic section of the main hall's roof

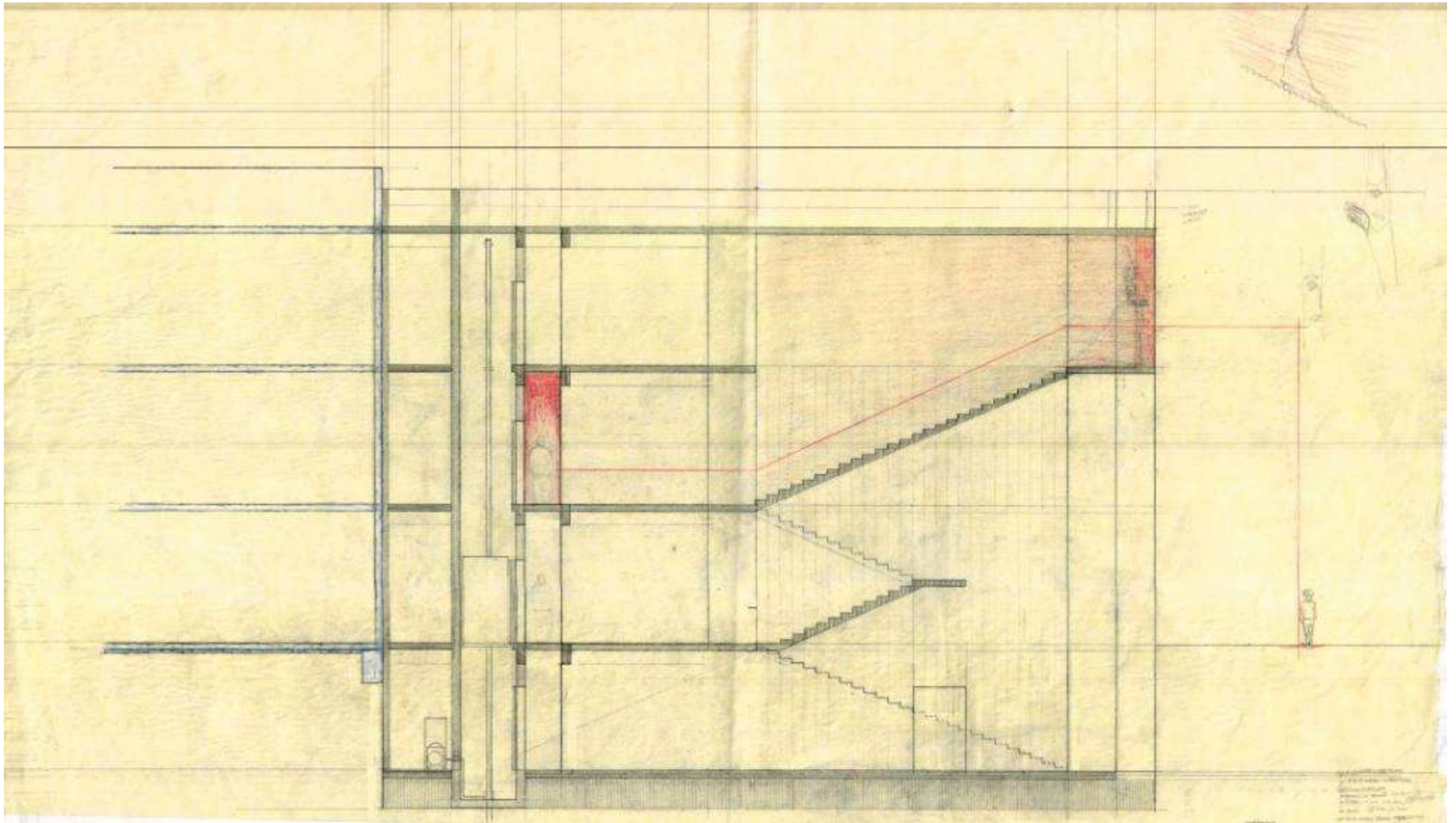
"Listen to your heart. It knows all things, because it came from the Soul of the World, and it will one day return there."

Paulo Coelho, *the alchemist*, 1992, p.71

The Queen

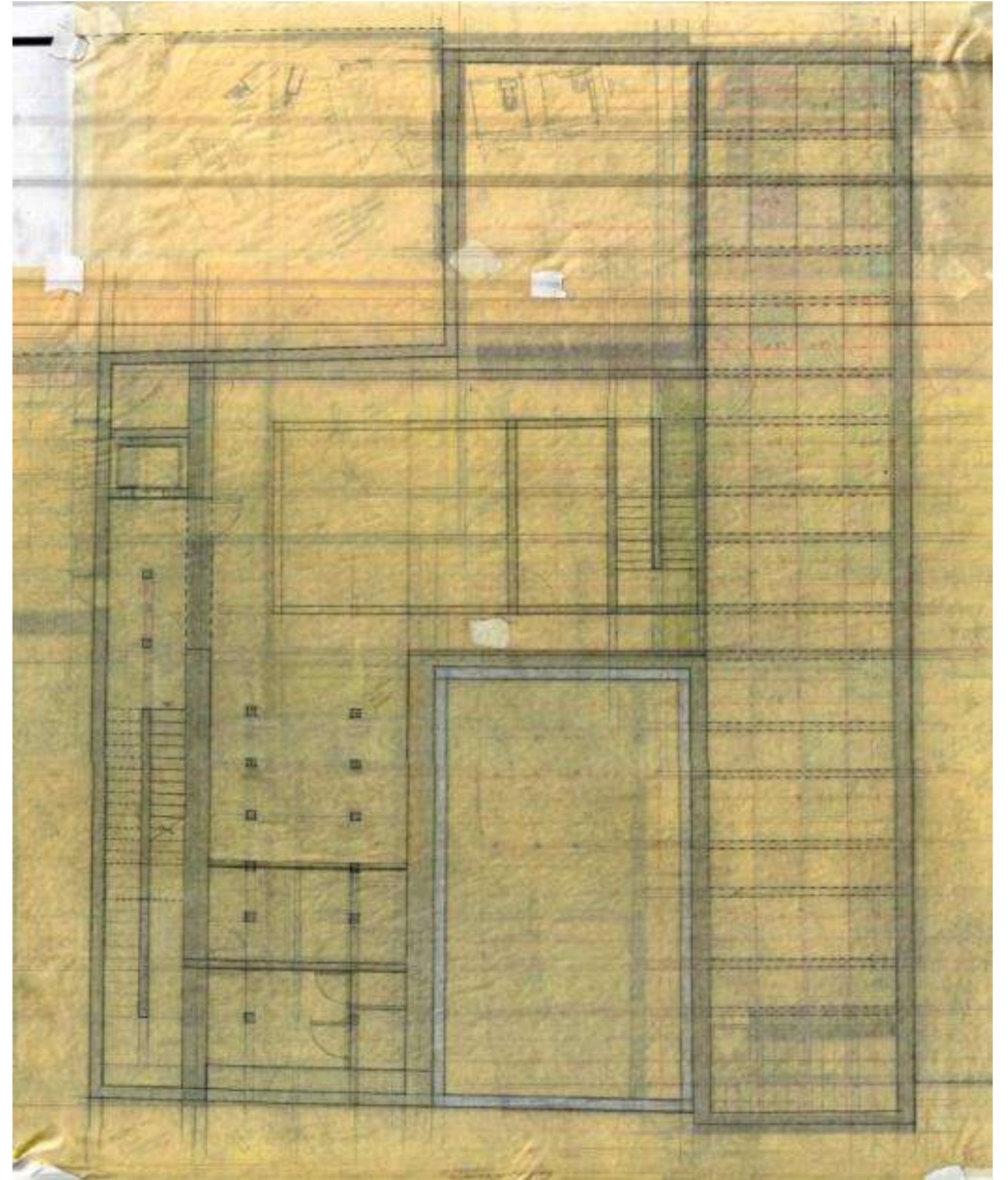
In order to walk out to the balcony he had to slide the glass door open but the old man had both of his hands busy, in the right one he had the Apple and in the left he was holding on to the closed umbrella. Since it was difficult for him at that point to stand without the aid of his umbrella he decided to let go of the Apple for a minute. He thought it was very convenient that the recessed handrail in the concrete wall extended all the way to the glass door and had created a small niche big enough to fit the Apple perfectly. However, when the door slid open it pushed the Apple up the recessed handrail all the way to the top, which was exactly where the Queen was waiting with her hand ready to receive the Apple at the other end of the handrail. She grabbed the Apple, turned around facing the window and waited. It was now summer.

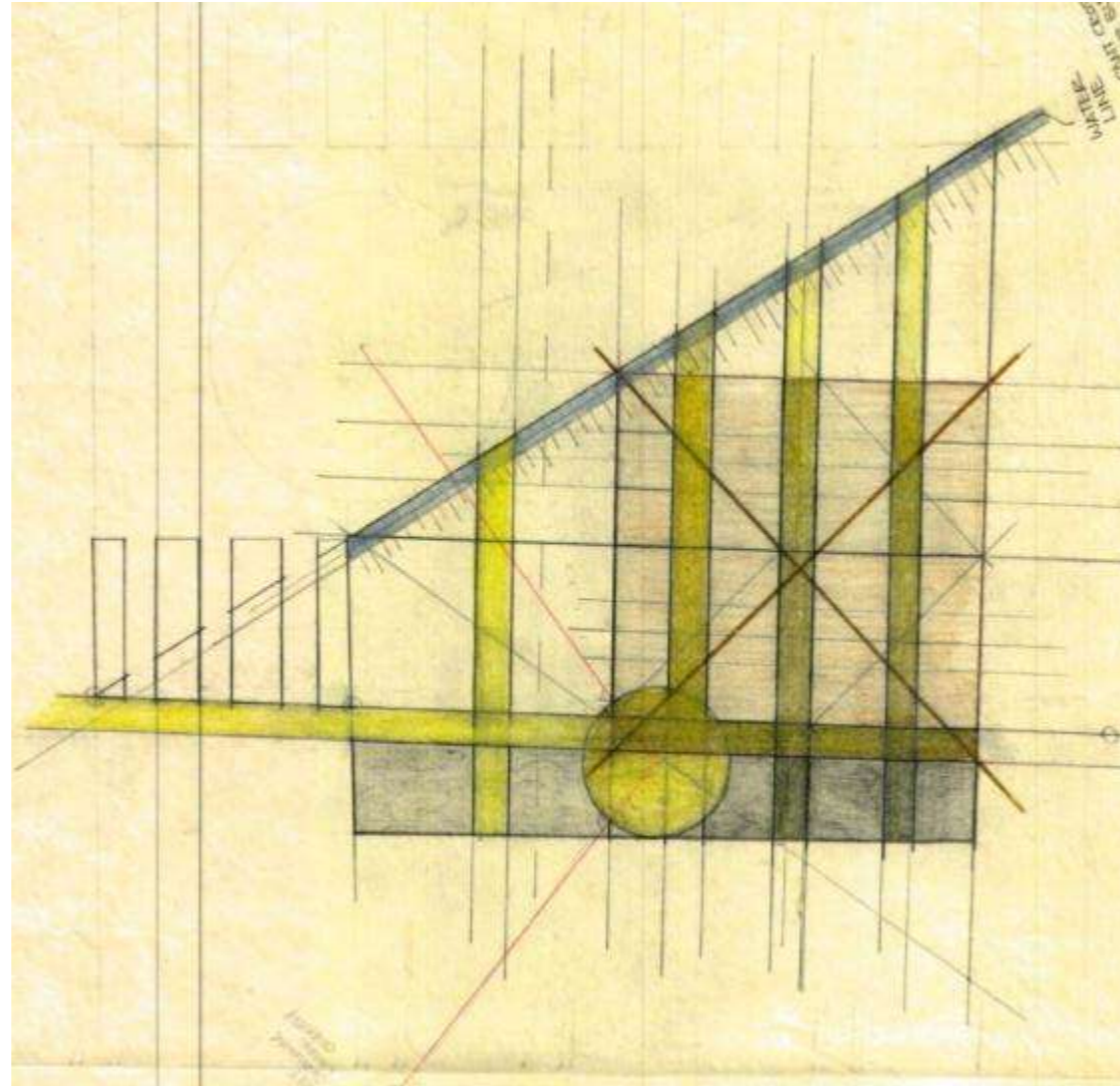
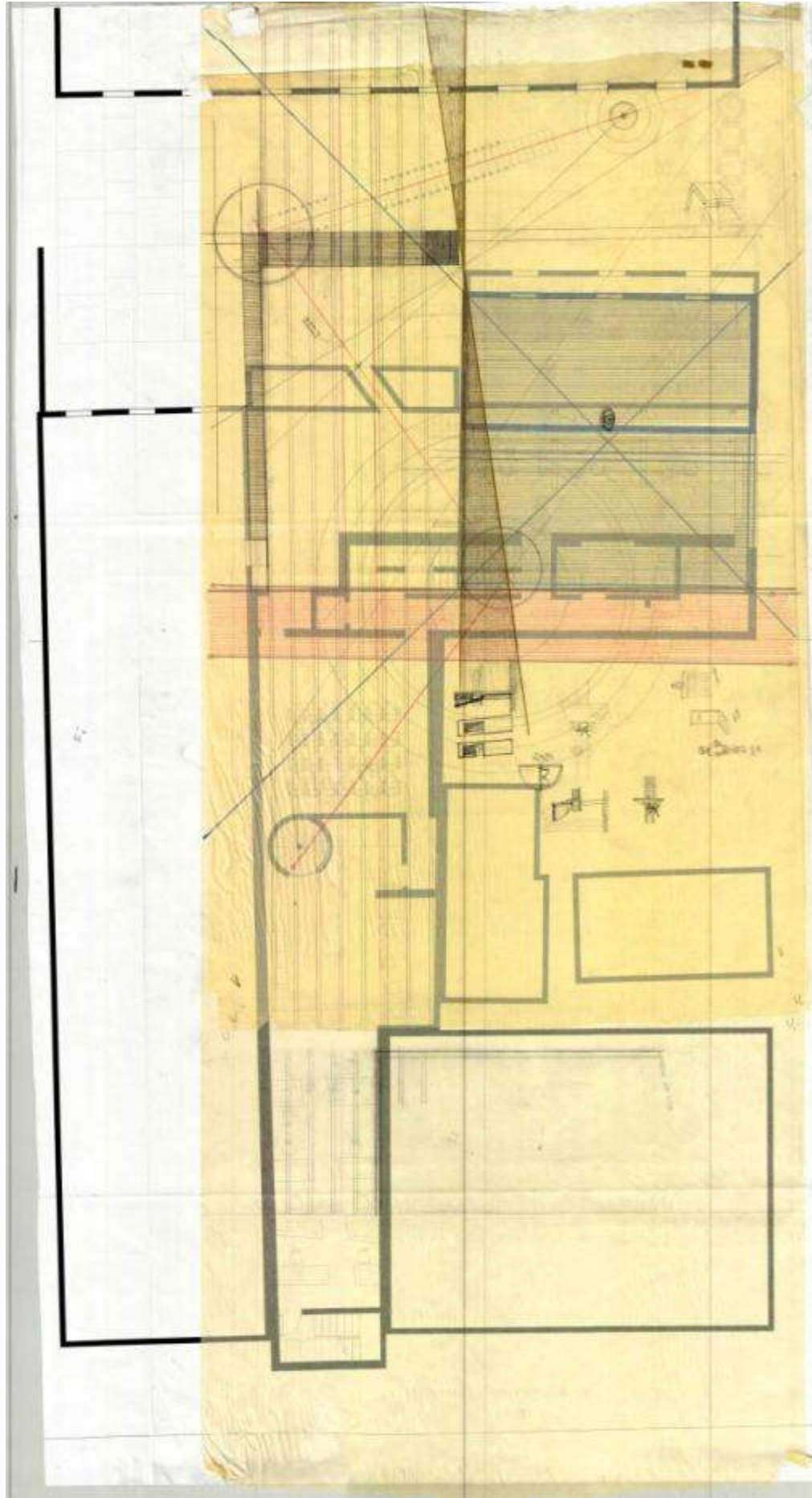




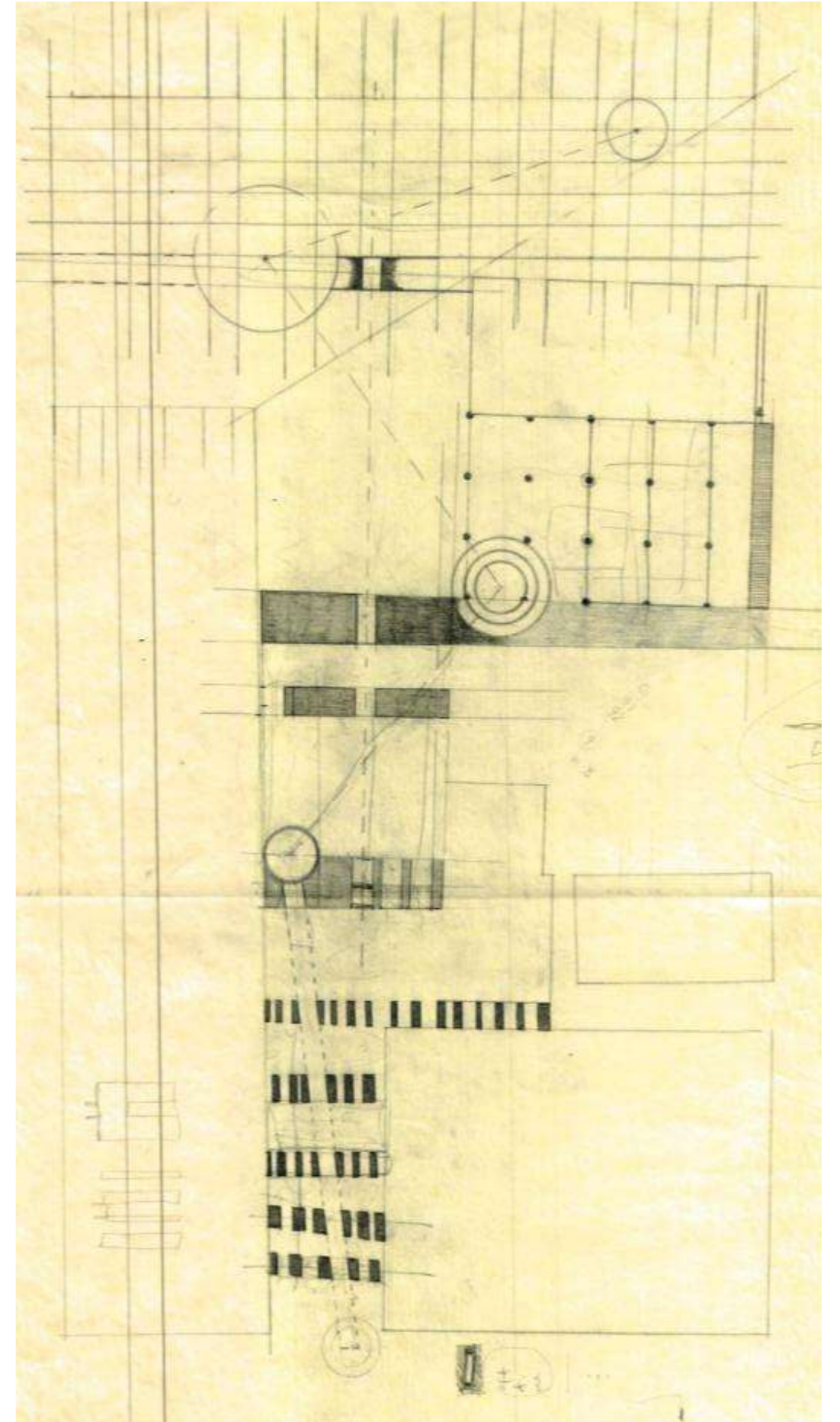
Section showing the path the apple took from the hands of the Old man to the hands of the queen and then to Ramsey's Alley

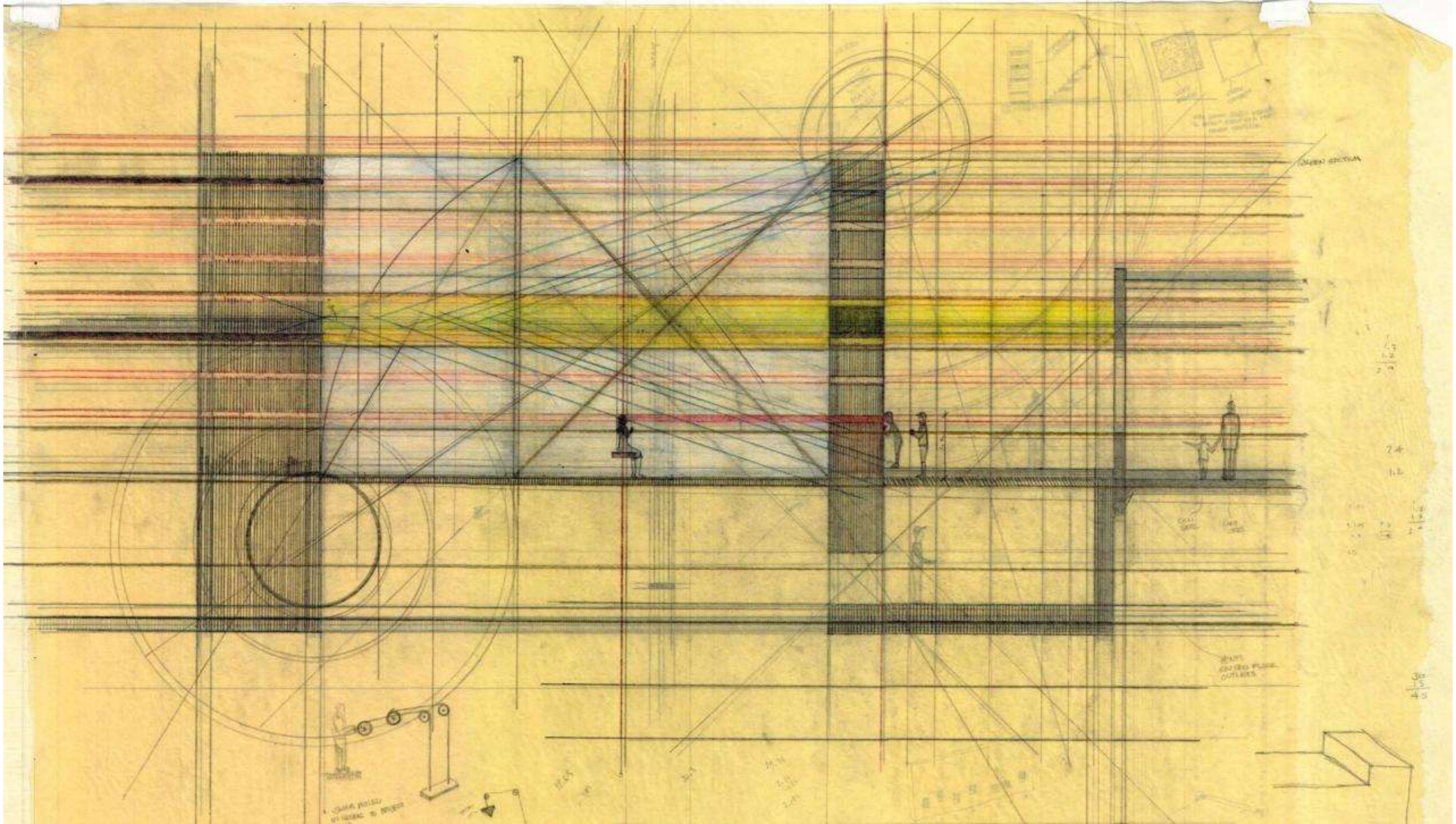
It is worth noting that the Queen's character in this story is mainly derived from Queen Cassiopeia. The "Cassiopeia" constellation also known as "the Queen" was named after the vain Queen Cassiopeia in Greek mythology. She was punished to orbit the north pole on her throne and spend half of that time suspended upside down and the other half in an upright position. I attempted to recreate this "half and half" situation on the site by relating the Queen's plot to the adjacent existing building. The Queen's plot is exactly the same shape and area as the neighbor's footprint, and both plots form a perfect square when put together. Also, the Queen's plot was divided into identical squares that later evolved into a symmetrical structural grid of steel beams and columns. The materials used are concrete, steel, glass and charred wood.



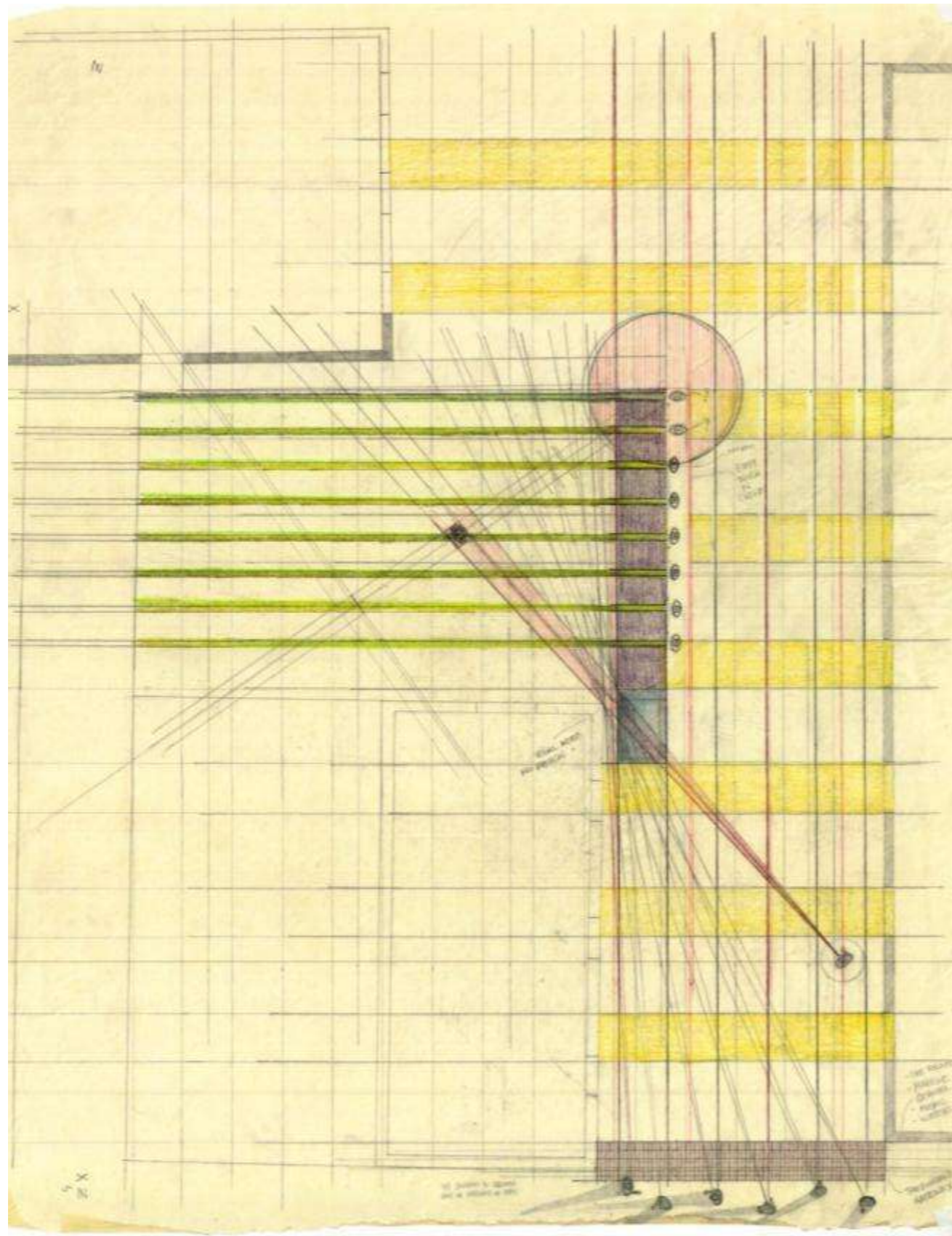


Geometrical relationships within the Queen's plot



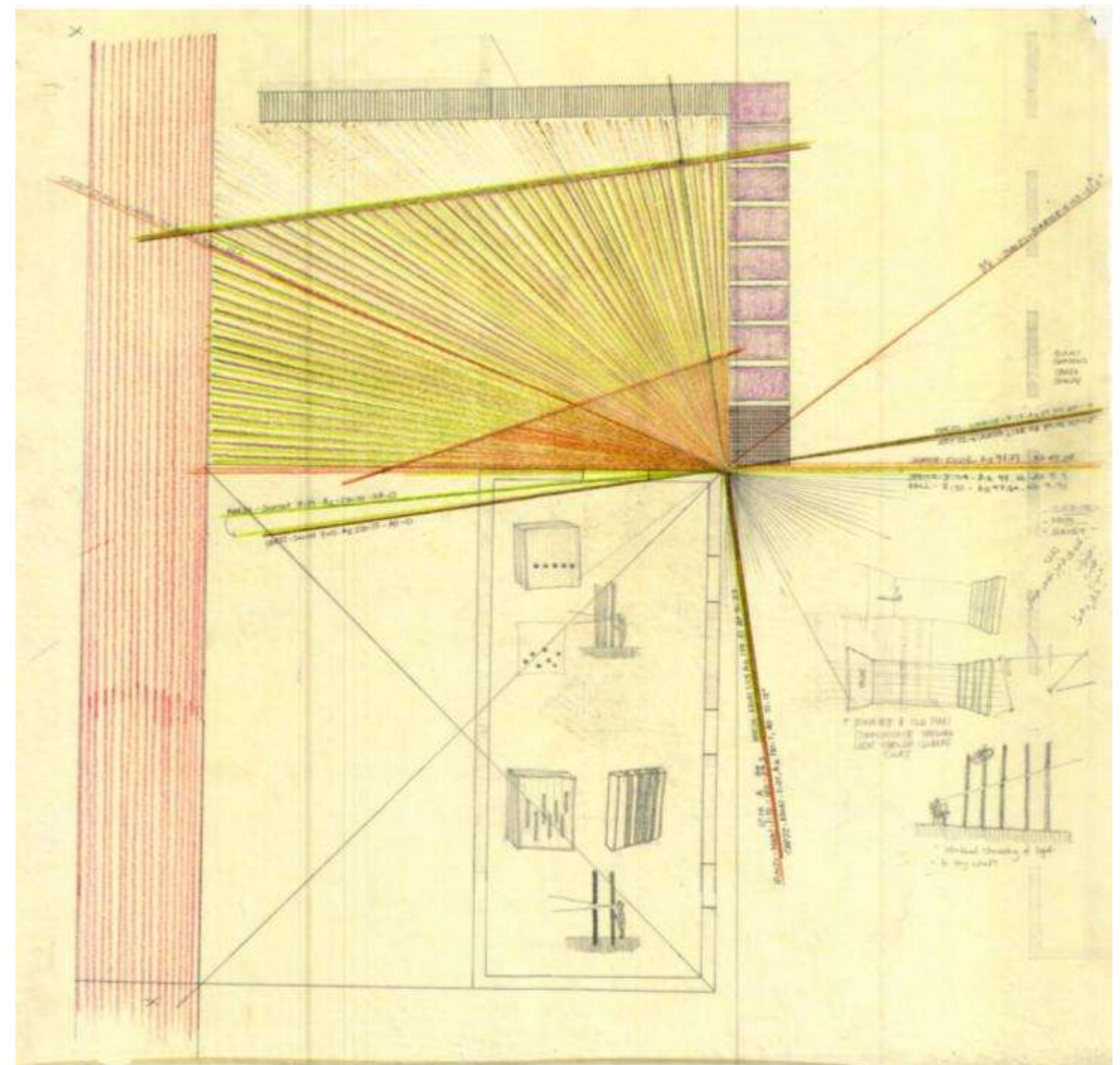


Schematic section of the courtyard



Narrative and geometry analysis of the courtyard

Sun studies of the courtyard



"No such theory of principle can be laid down for those things which lie beyond, in the realm of the immaterial."

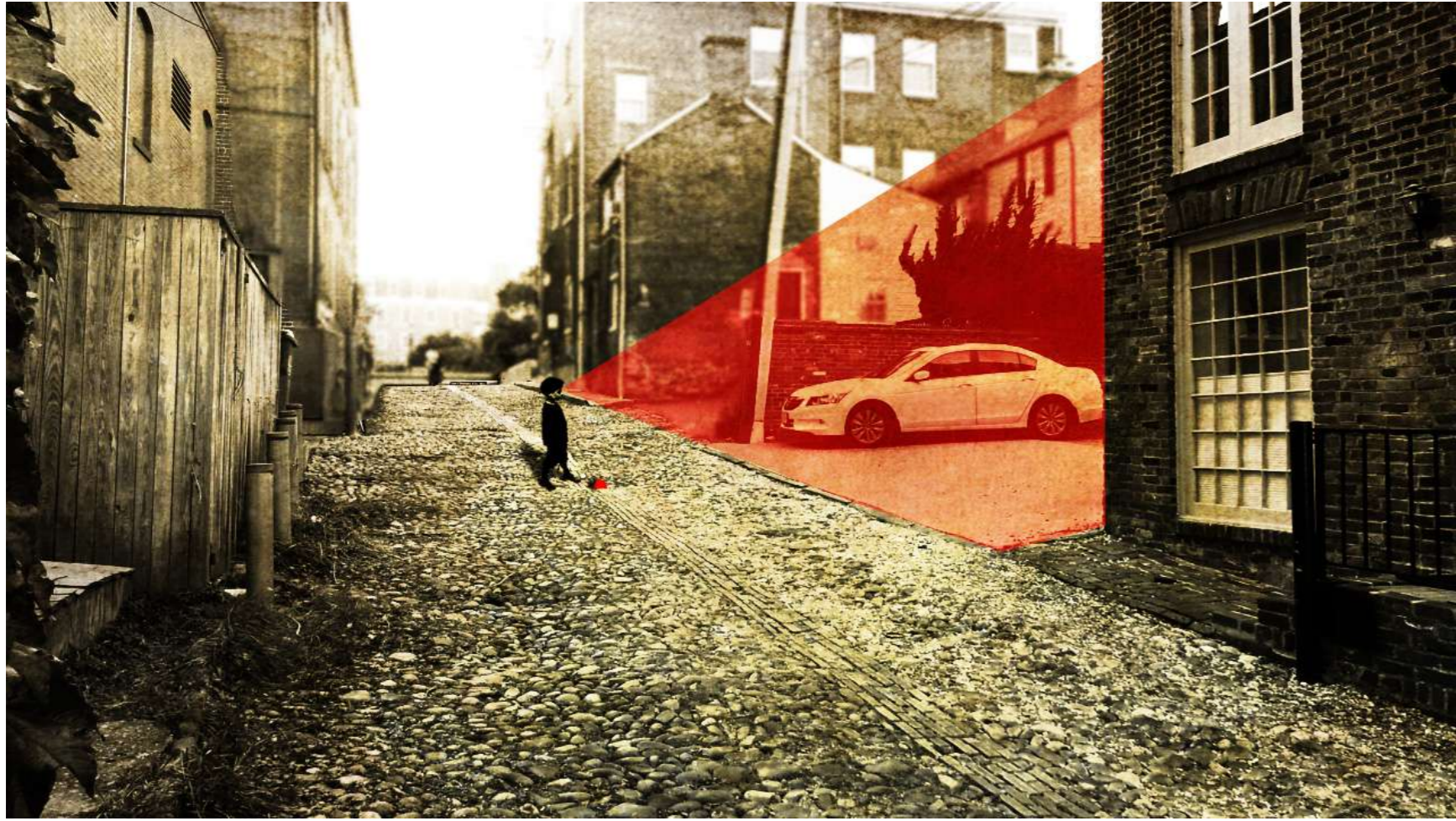
Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*, 1977, p.12

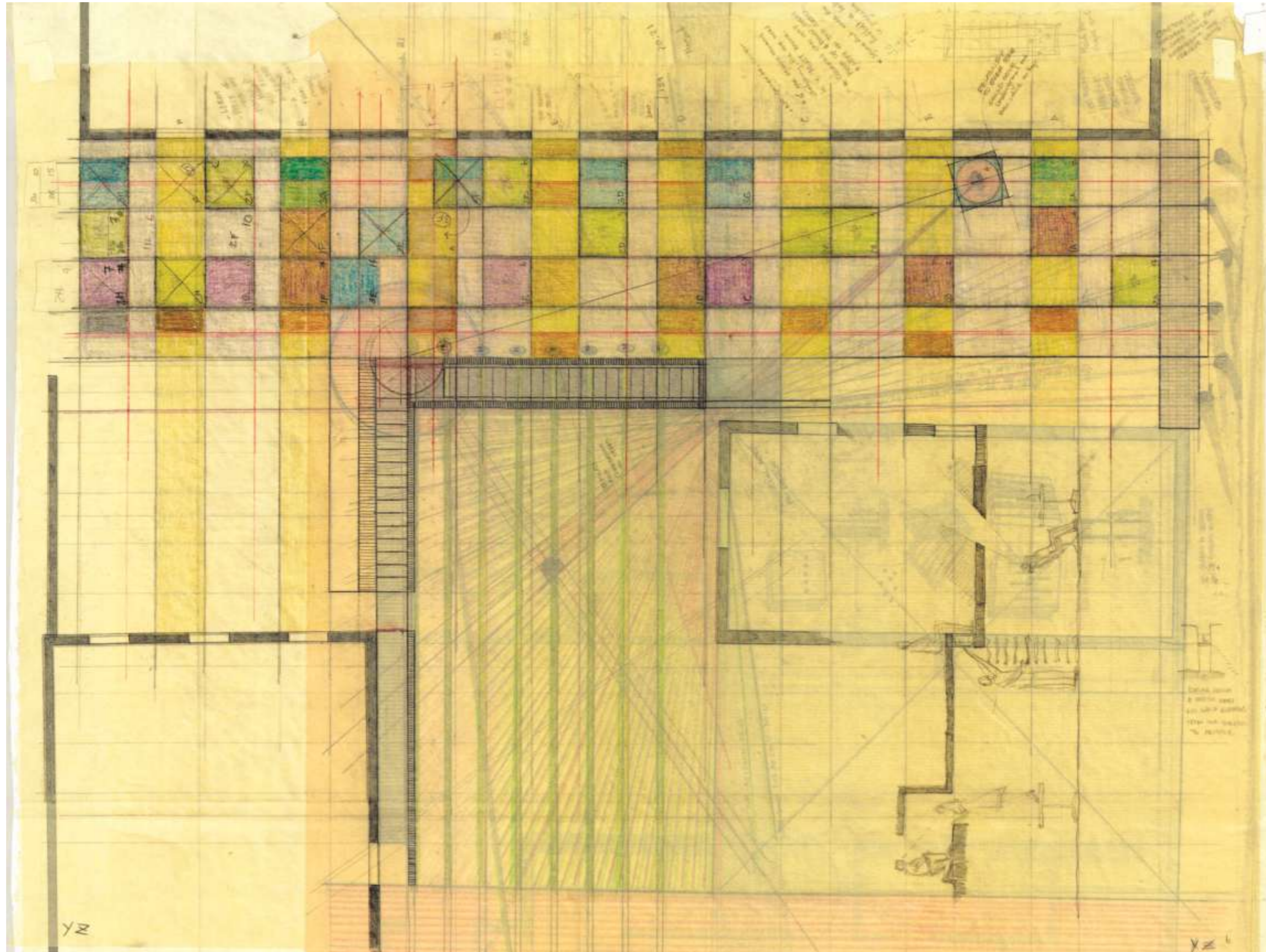
The Child

At that time the Child was mesmerized by the big apple tree at the top of Ramsey's Alley. It was full of ripe red apples all of which were out of his reach. Suddenly, all apples fell down from the tree at once and started rolling down the alley. The Child, so eager to have an apple, followed them. At this time the Queen was still waiting at the window and as she saw the apples rolling down she discreetly opened the window and threw the Apple out into the alley. The rest of the apples continued to roll down very fast and the child could not catch up, but lucky for him one Apple got stuck in a small depression in the ground and was left behind or so did he think. He picked up the Apple and continued to walk down the alley. On his left side he saw a lady appearing and disappearing from behind a wall on a swing. The Child was lured to the swing and so he crossed the threshold that marked the end of the alley and the beginning of the Child's zone (animator's studio). It was now spring.

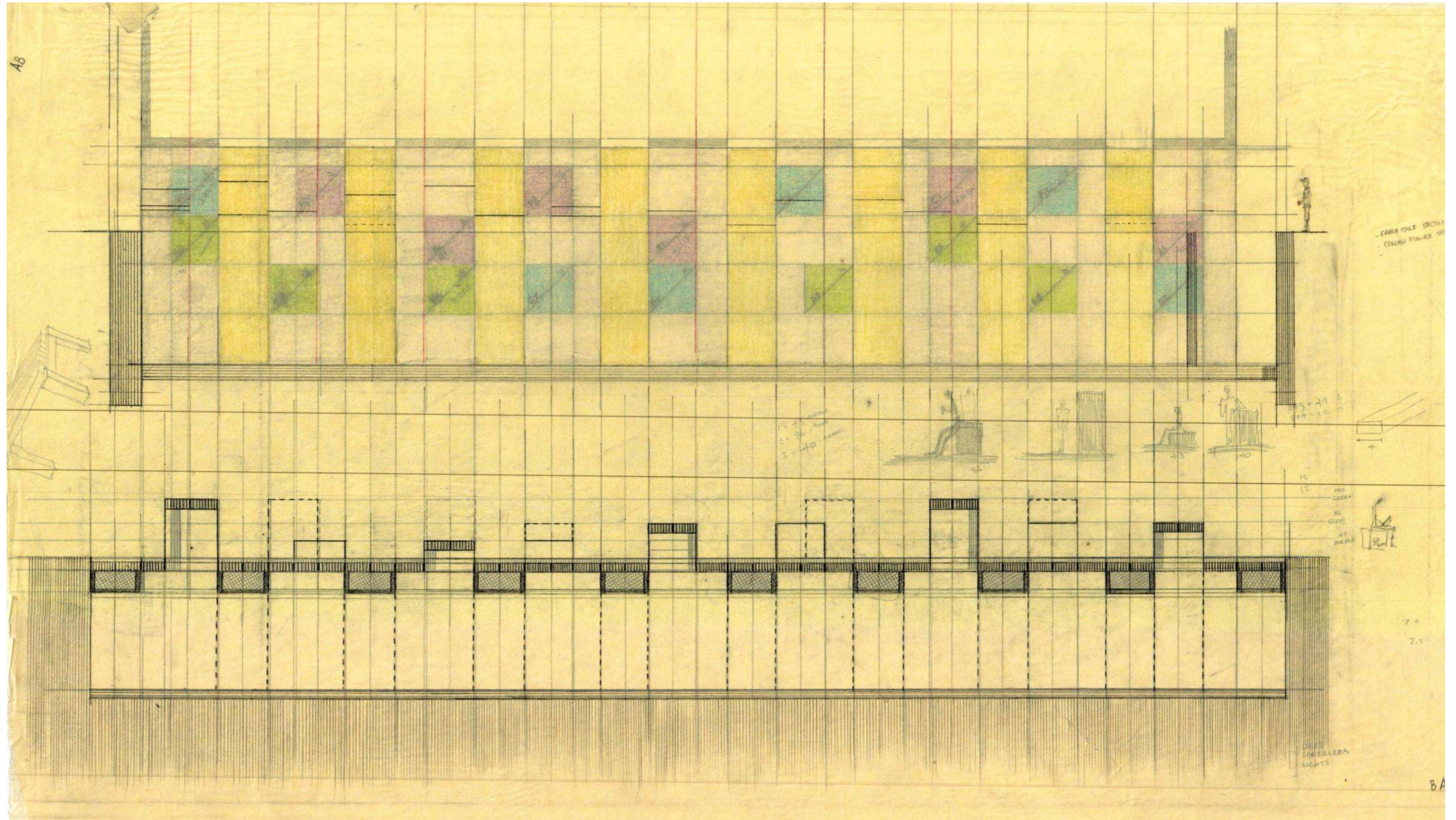




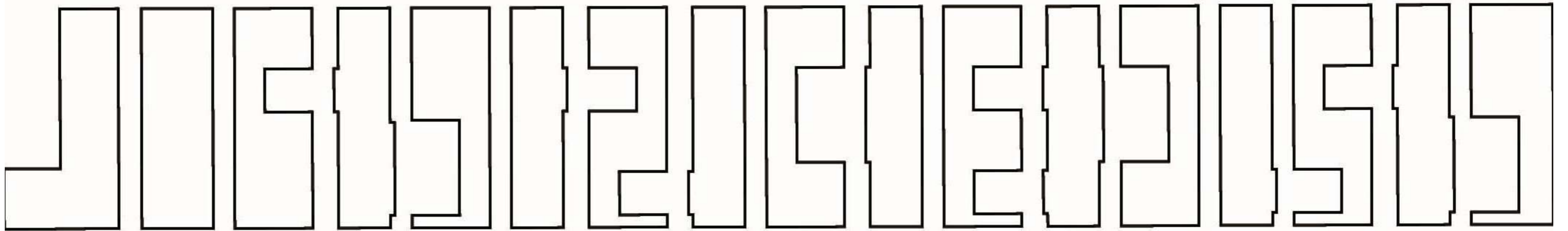
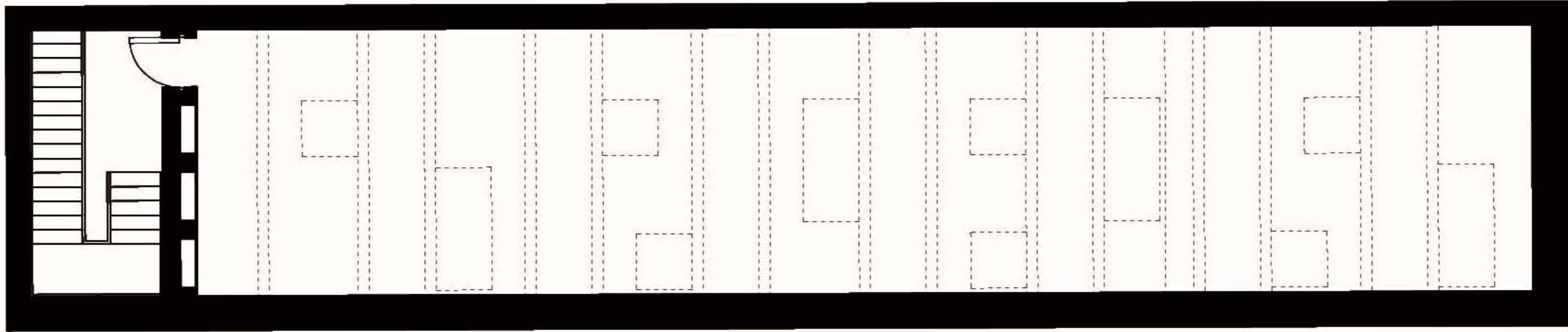




Schematic Plan of the Child's Zone and Floor Pattern



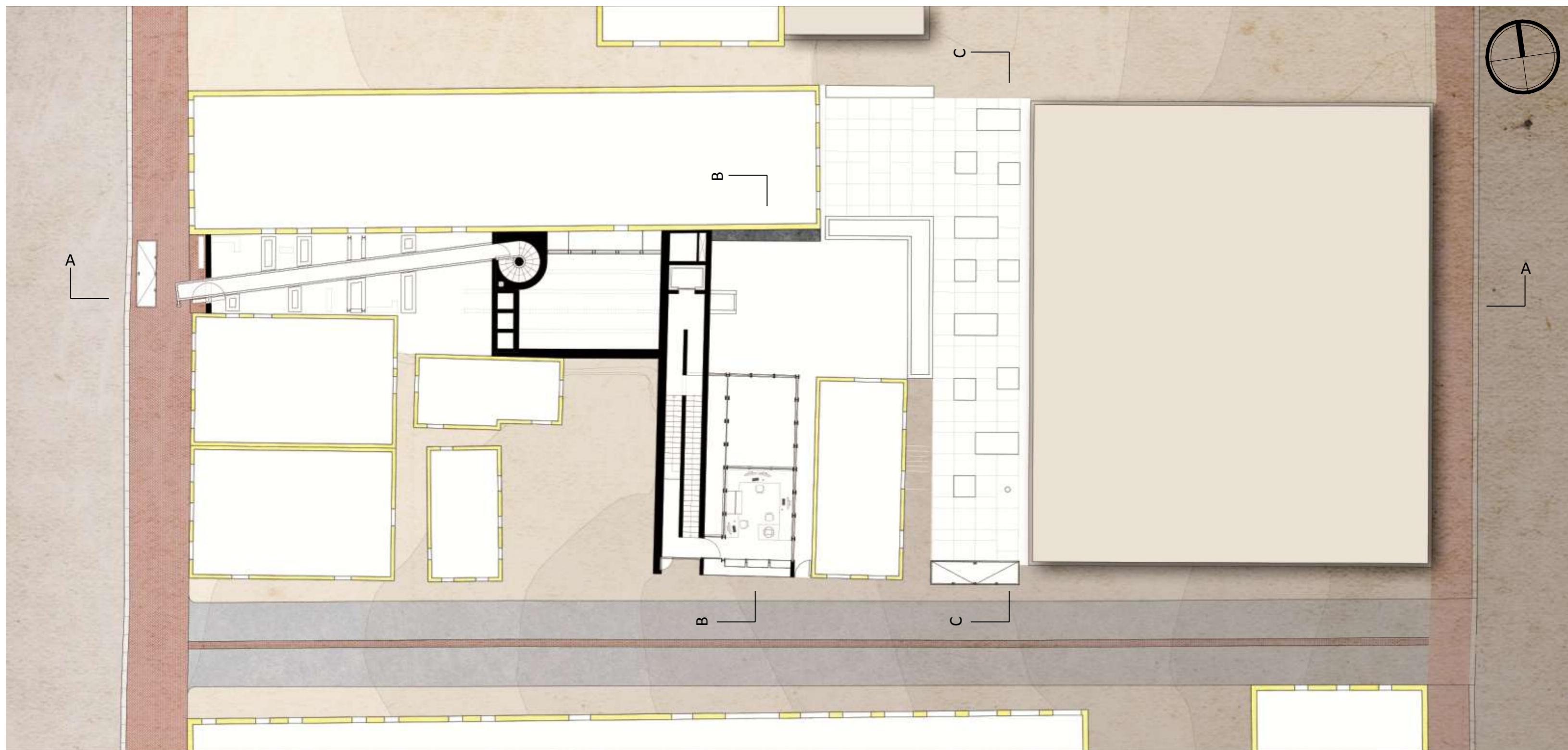
Schematic section of the Child's Zone



The pre-cast concrete panels that form the roof of the Child's zone. They resemble pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that the construction workers responsible for putting them together will be forced to figure out and complete.

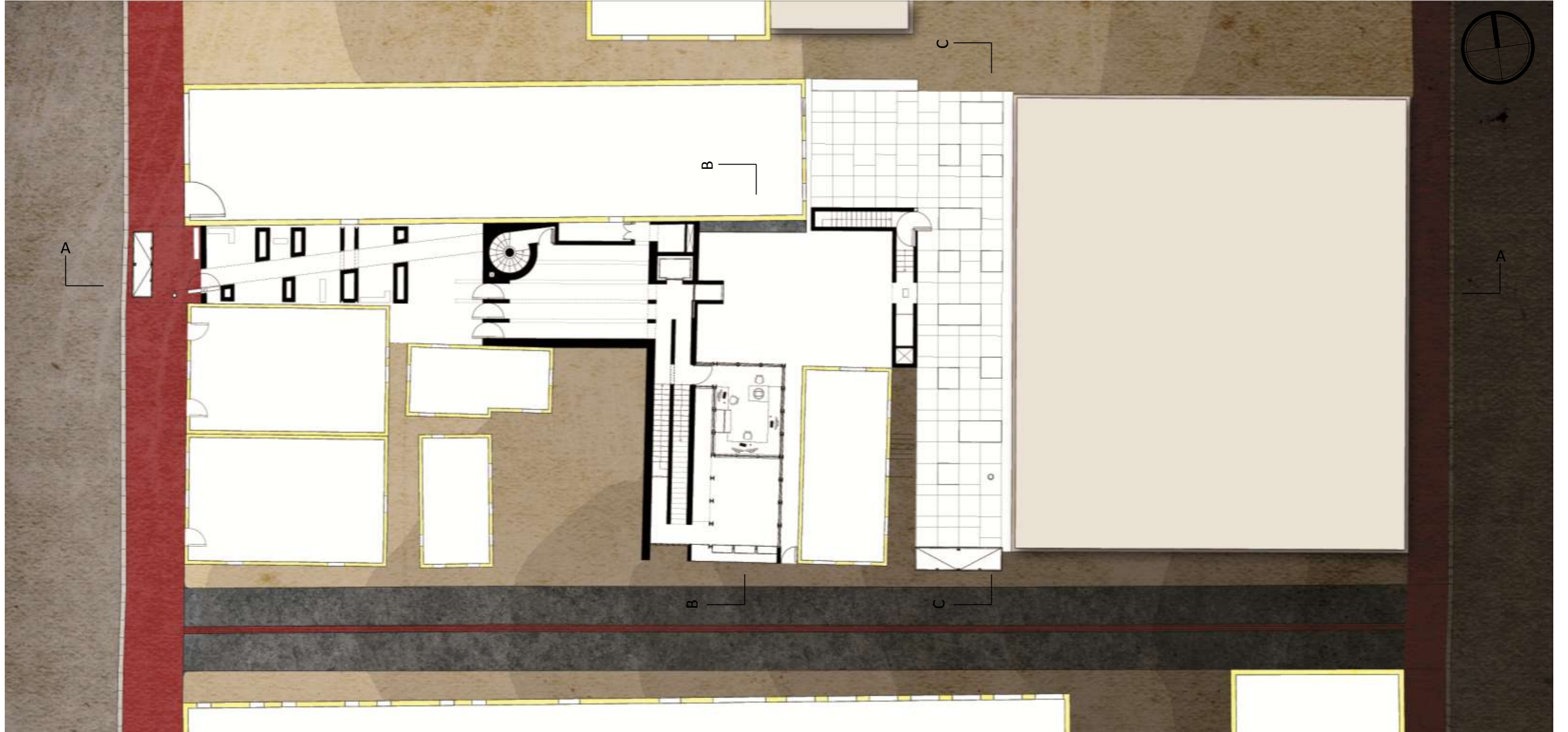
"No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots reach down to hell"

Carl Gustav Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, 1959, p.43

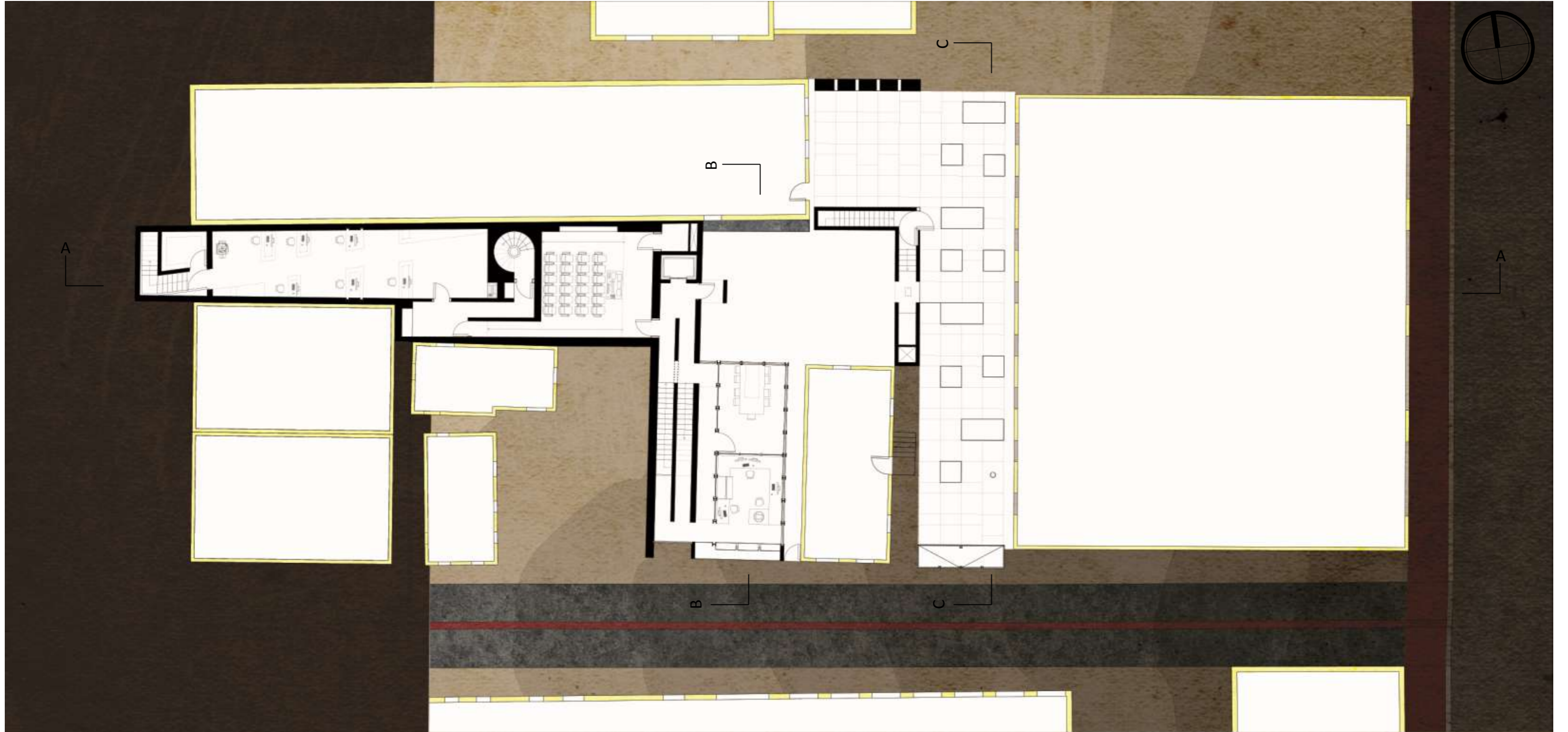


Level 1 – scale 1:200



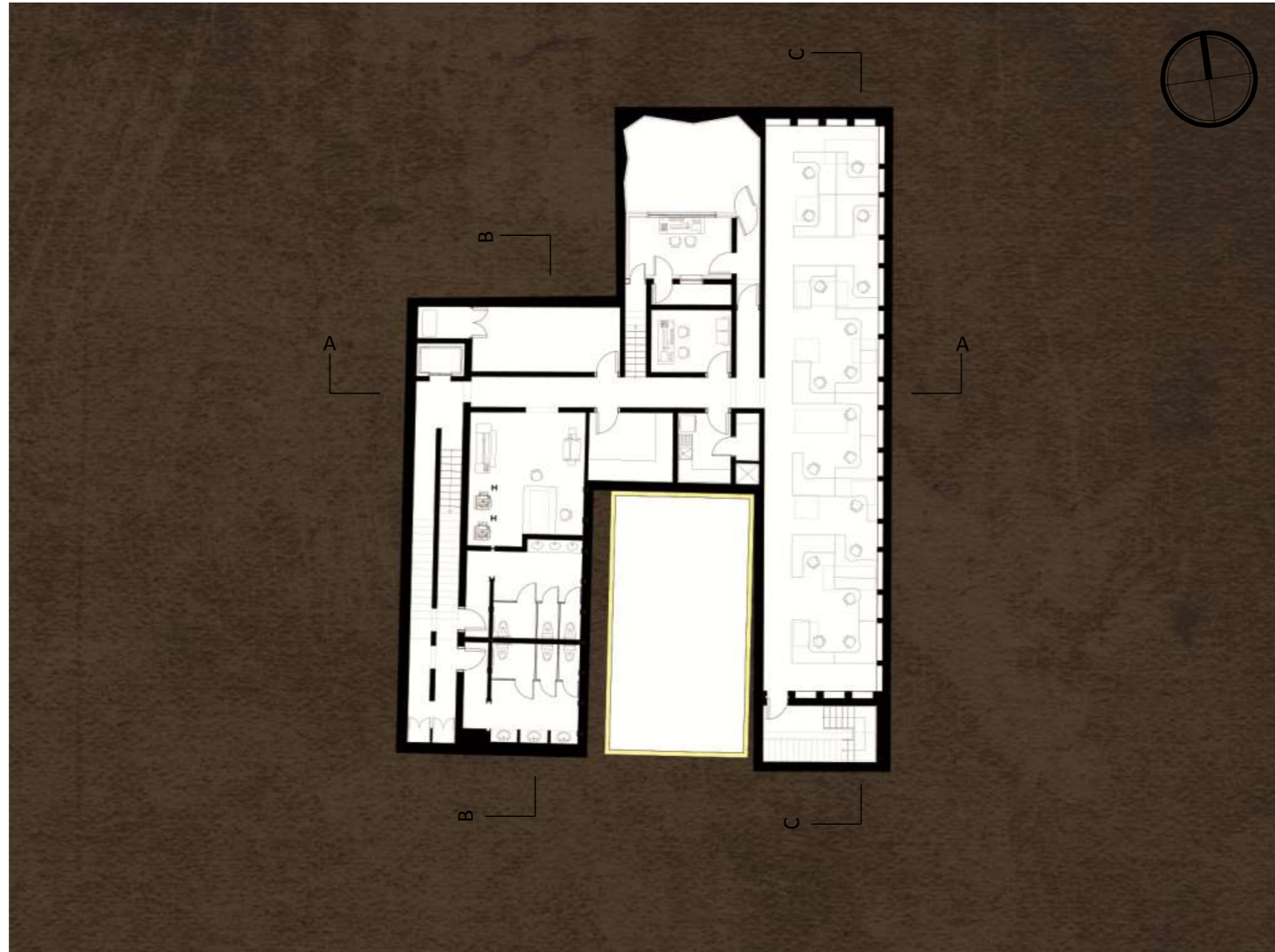


Level 2 – scale 1:200



Level 3 – scale 1:200





Level 4 – scale 1:200





West Elevation— scale 1:200





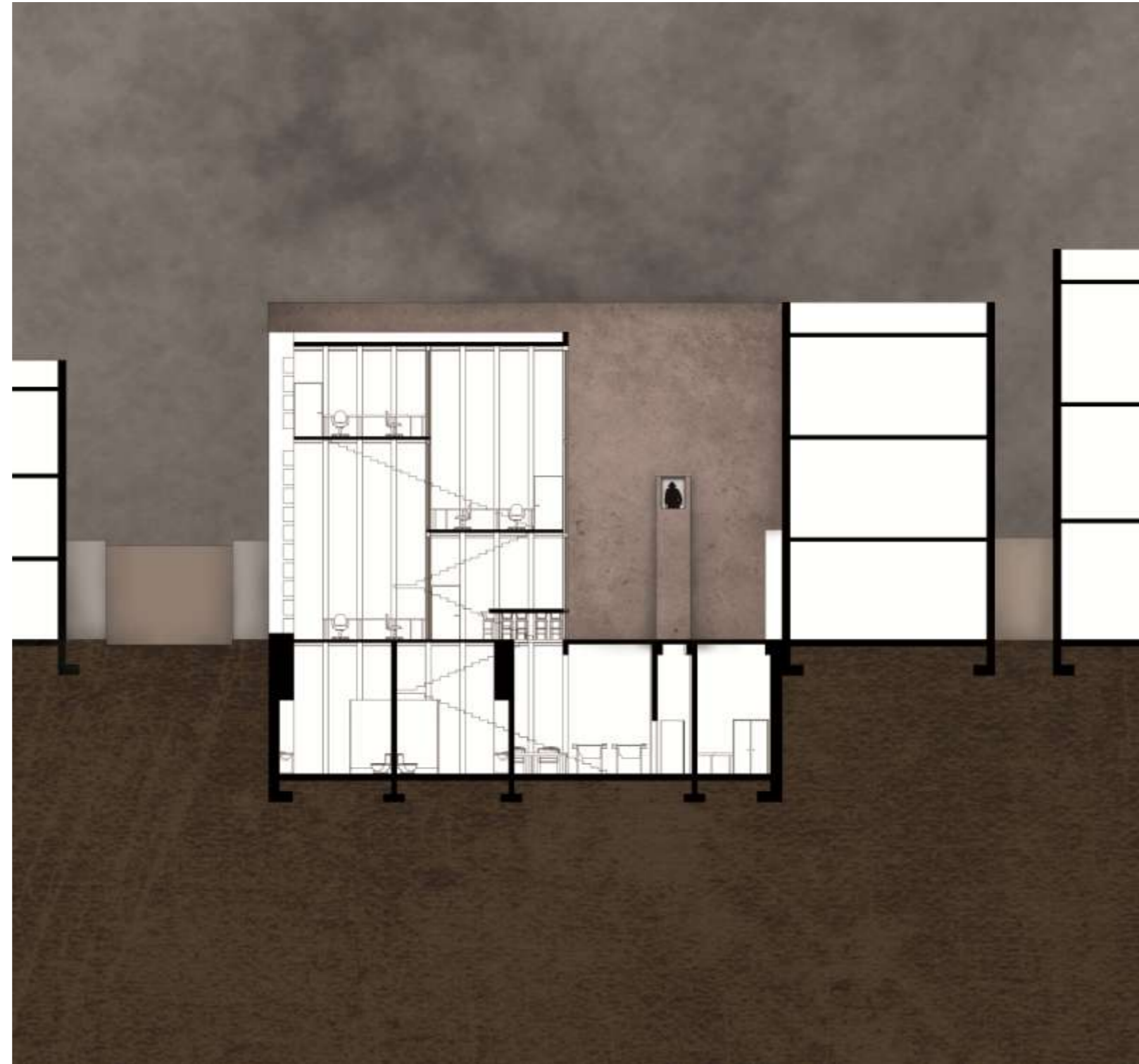
South Elevation – scale 1:200





Section AA – scale 1:200





Section BB – scale 1:200





Section CC – scale 1:200



Conclusion

There were never two worlds, there has only been one.

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