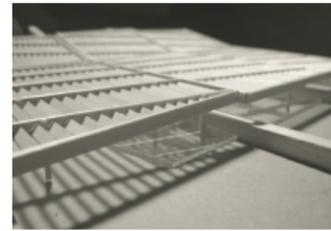
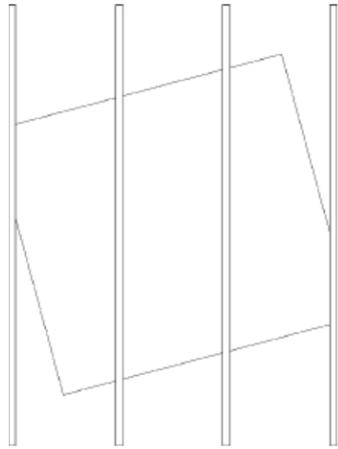


By Julie Redenshek Thesis Defense: May 11, 2006 - Blacksburg, VA



AESTHETIC MOVEMENT IDEALS IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE —
The President Garfield Historic Site Visitor Center



Michael Ermann, Chairman

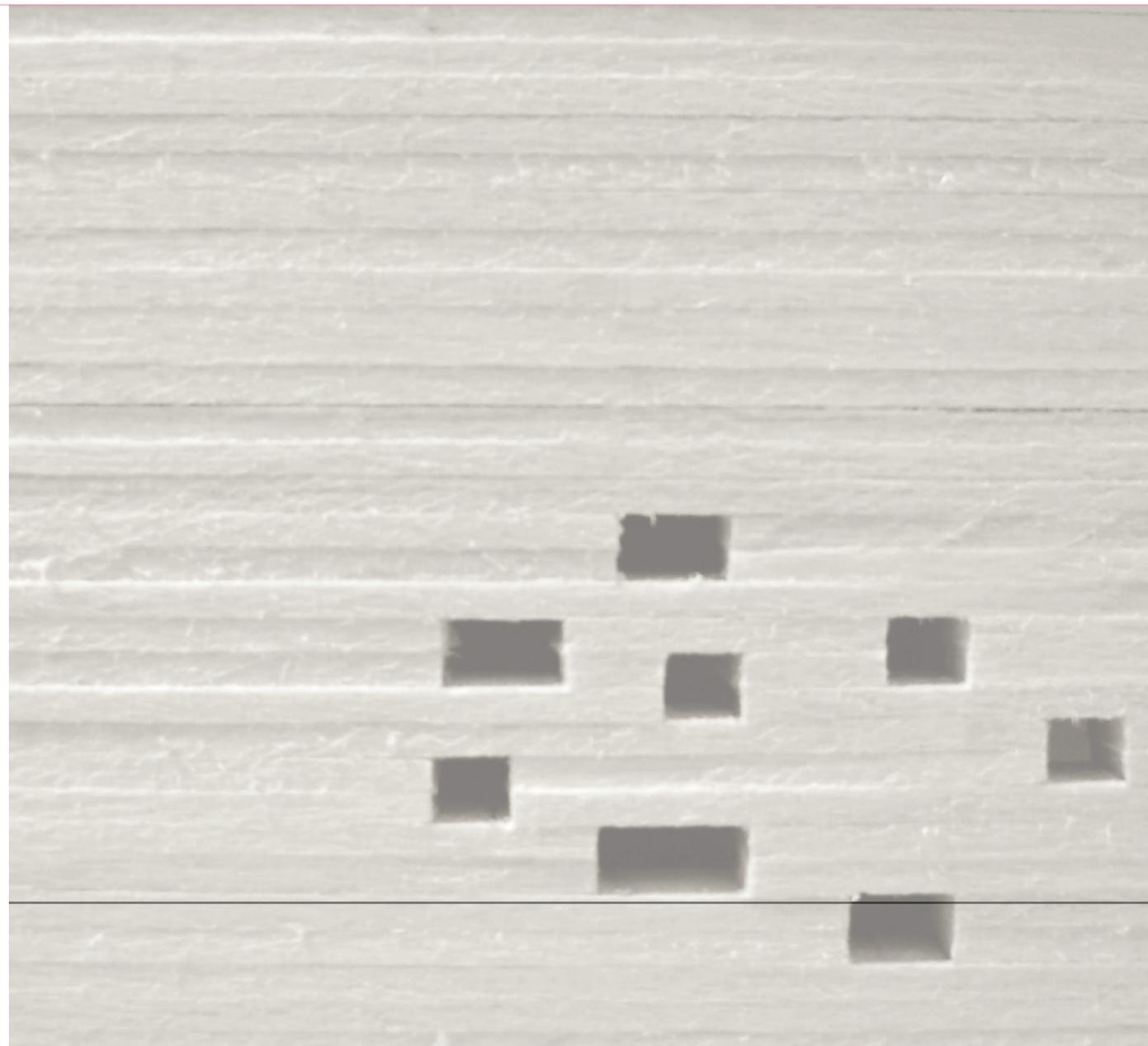
Marilyn Casto

Bill Galloway

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE.

6- Abstract
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ABSTRACT

The James A. Garfield National Historic Site in Mentor, Ohio includes numerous structures of mid 19th century Victorian Era architecture. After the grounds became a national landmark in 1945, all new additions conformed to the existing historic style. This Thesis proposes that the existing visitors center be relocated from the carriage house to a new structure on site. This new visitor center is sensitive to the existing however, visually different. This architectural position is contradictory to previous additions in the past 50 years. Therefore, to draw a parallel and in an effort to allude to the past, the contemporary visitor center contains the same philosophical ideals of the Victorian reform Aesthetic Movement. Three of those ideals that are present in the visitor center include horizontality, dynamic space and honesty of structure. For the Aesthetes, horizontality was an influence from Japanese design, while the creation of dynamic space was meant to create an emotional response. Honesty of structure meant that a building should possess a clear and evident expression of its structural system and materials. In other words, using materials for their own sake. Even though over one hundred years have passed since the beginning of the Aesthetic Movement, this thesis is an exploration and continuation of those main ideals into contemporary architecture.



THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

Influences, Principles and Case Studies

The 19th century was a time of rapid change throughout the world. The industrial revolution was in full swing by the latter half of the century and information was traveling faster than it had ever before. It was only a matter of time that the design and architecture would also be going through a revolution of its own. The International Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862 showcased the cluttered and busy designs of the Victorian Era, which inspired numerous designers and philosophers to think in a new way. Many reform movements spawned from this hatred of Victorian design, one being the Aesthetic Movement. The participants of this movement wanted more simplified and regulated designs not only for architecture, but also for all aspects of design.

The multiple ideas propelling the Aesthetic movement take root in the writings of art critic John Ruskin. Many of Ruskin's writings were significant, but *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* is one of the most influential. No specifics or scheme was given by Ruskin for designers to follow; only his philosophy was presented to the readers. "No theorist writing on the principles governing materials in architecture has had a greater appreciation for the inherent qualities of building matter than John Ruskin."¹ A large part of what Ruskin is known for is his theories on the use of materials. He believed that a good building is one that plainly shows people how it was put together and this expression of materials can make the building's atmosphere poetic.² According to Ruskin, the "honesty of materials" follows five basic principles:

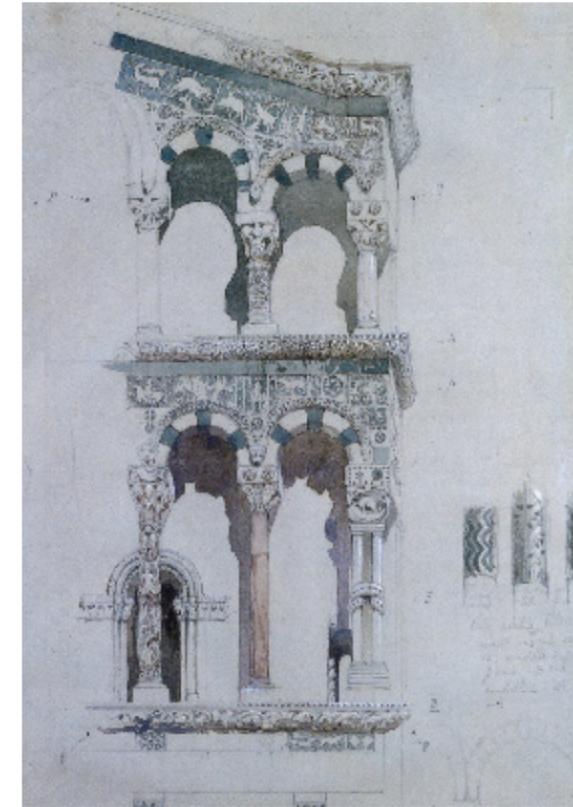
10-1: Peacock, Freer Gallery Courtyard, 1923.



10-2,3: Owen Jones, *The Grammer of Ornament*, 1856.

INFLUENCES

Sketch of San Michele, Lucca-
John Ruskin



- Materials should be of highest quality possible.
- "No material should ever be disguised as another,"³ unless it is blatantly obvious that it could not be that.
- Use materials for their natural, physical or structural properties.
- "A structural element should not be made in a given material with a technique that has not traditionally been used for that purpose."⁴
- Use materials that have been established in previous buildings.

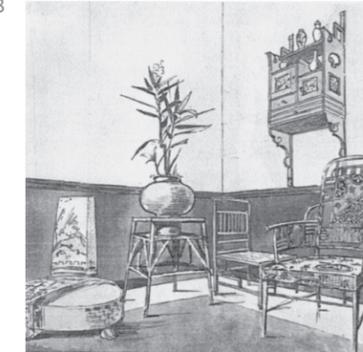


Caricature of Oscar Wilde, 1883

“The designers and painters wished not only to work in a new way but to convince the general public of the rightness of their views.”⁵ One person that took on the role of battling the public was Ruskin’s student at Oxford, Oscar Wilde. Because the “extreme” aspects of the movement prevailed in the public’s knowledge, a lot of ridicule and satire was applied to the Aesthetic movement.⁶ Wilde was an Aesthete that received a lot of this ridicule, but by no means was he a modest man. He was very flamboyant, theatrical, and fashion oriented, leaving him open to criticism. For example, Aesthetes, Wilde included, were viewed as “amoral (if not immoral) poseurs, self-indulgent and irresponsible.”¹⁰ Many caricatures and spoofs of Wilde came out in magazines and newspapers in the early 1880’s during his tour of America. But the negative attention was attention no less and Wilde was given enough exposure to coin the phrase, “art for art’s sake.”⁷ First and foremost, art was more important to the Aesthetic movement than moral or sociopolitical ideas. Regardless of the criticism from the public, Oscar Wilde is known as “the Aesthetic movement’s most successful popularizer.”⁸

INFLUENCES

E.W. Godwin, 1872-73



Another important source of inspiration for the Aesthetic Movement came from Japan. The small Pacific island would have a huge impact of the design world of the United States and England because Japan had been closed off from the rest of the world until the 1850’s. Once the doors were open, American and British designers were exposed to something new and different and many became fascinated with the simplicity of Japanese artwork. Since these objects were easily accessible, Japanese objects and artifacts were put on display in a “Japanese Section” at the 1862 International Exhibition, further exposing the world to a different style of design. However, the obsession was more for crafts and design than for Japanese fine art.⁹ It was the simplicity of the color, asymmetry, and the use of horizontal lines in the designs that fascinated the Aesthetes.

The architecture produced by the Aesthetic Movement designers formally differs from the previous Victorian buildings. The Aesthetes thought less of spaces as room, but as interconnected volumes. This new way of open planning and putting together volumes of space was more of a classical idea rather than Gothic or medieval.¹⁰ The Japanese **horizontality** also had an effect, opposite to the verticality of Victorian High Gothic. Room heights and levels were varied to create an emotional response for the visitor. James Kornwolf states, "...rooms projected over porches; walls and roofs interlocked in amazing ways. Forms very much began to follow functions and a variety of forms were used: circular, octagonal, and even irregular spaces joined more conventional square and rectangles."¹¹ All of these new architectural expressions of **dynamic space** were used to evoke feeling from the visitor, the ultimate goal of the Aesthetic Movement.



The Red House by Philip Webb and William Morris, 1859 is considered to be one of the first houses of the Aesthetic Movement.

PRINCIPLES

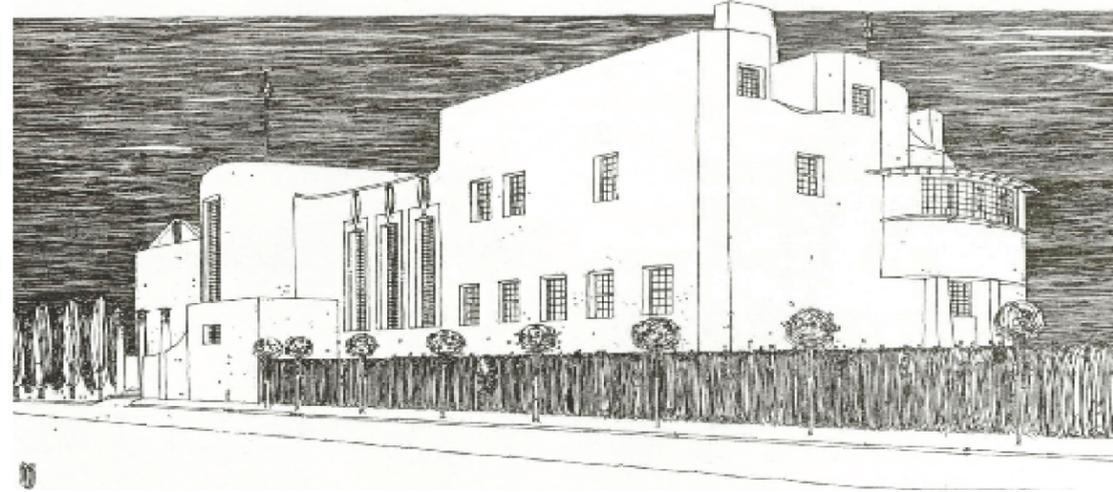
Portiere- Candace Wheeler, 1884.

Finally, the Aesthetic Movement position on structure and materials reflects the ideals of John Ruskin. As stated before, Ruskin transformed "structural formulation into a principle of architectural design by obligating it to the expression of honesty."¹² Two keywords that help explain "**honesty**" in structure and materials are explicit and manifest. The building should possess a clear and evident expression of its structural system and materials. "It did not have to display every aspect of structure necessary to assure stability, but it could not appear to be constructed in one way and actually be assembled in another."¹³ Along with the display of structure and how the building was put together, the materials of the building should be used in an appropriate manner. For example, stone or brick should not be used in a tensile manner; the material's natural properties should be taken into consideration when the structure is designed.



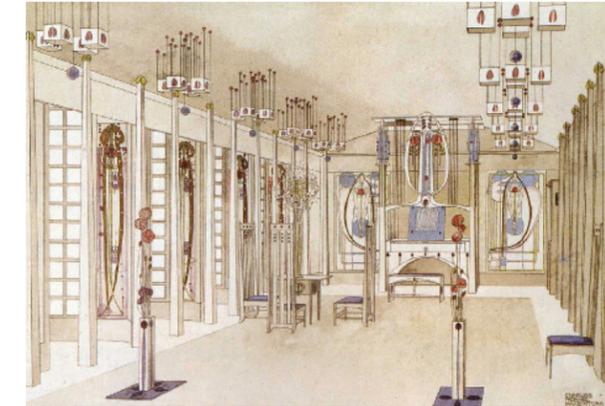
Since this house was for a competition, this project did not have clients or a budget, so Mackintosh was able to design freely and create an ideal house. ¹⁴ The end result was a “tightly integrated design” of architecture, furniture, flower stands, and light fixtures. ¹⁵ The exterior has no ornamentation while the façade does not have any rules or “reconceived patterns.” ¹⁶ The roof has one main ridge that runs from one end to the other with no interruption, creating “broad unbroken surfaces that dominate.” ¹⁷ The elevational treatment is echoed in the plan. For example, the long ridge of the roof indicated the long string of rooms that are on the north end of the house.

Perspective

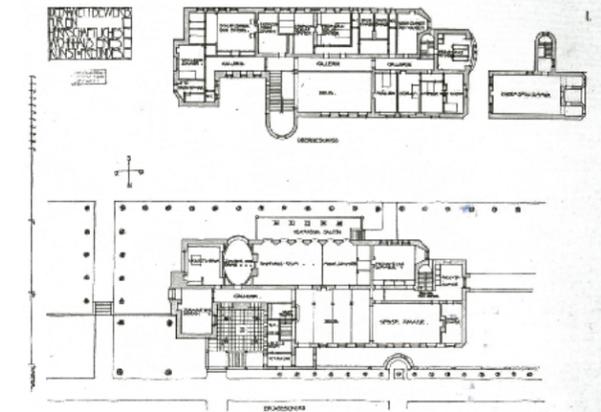


CASE STUDY I
House for an Art Lover by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1901

17-1: Perspective of the Music Room



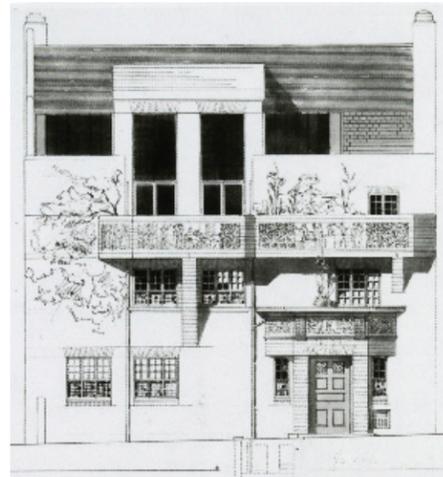
17-2: Ground and First Floor Plans



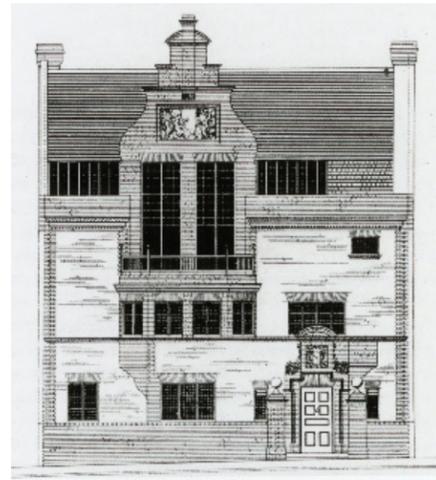
The interior of the house is quite different than the stark white exterior. The placement of the functions and their relationship to each other played an important role in Mackintosh’s design. He wanted the house to evoke feeling in order to create a unique experience. Howarth states, “...Mackintosh played upon a whole range of emotion. Each room was considered not as a box, a thing complete in itself, but as an element in a larger pattern, a pattern of related experiences.”¹⁸ These “experiences” begin in the small, confined entry that is

followed by a tall, two story grand hall. Branching off the hall is a series of one-story spaces for the dining room, reception room and music room. All of the spaces have moveable partitions that can be opened to the main hall, creating a very open plan. The hall and dining room are finished with dark woods and paint, while the surrounding rooms are naturally lit and are very light colored. Along with the room heights, the color and design of the rooms creates a dramatic physical and emotional contrast from room to room.

Original Design



Final Design

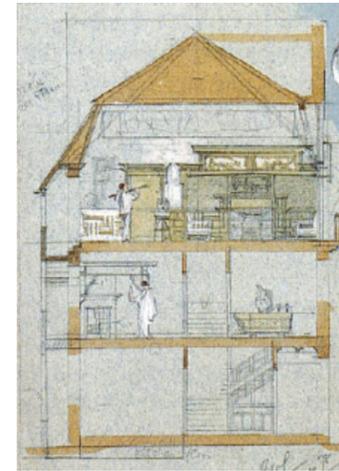


The house for artist Frank Miles on Tite Street went through many transformations during the design process. The original elevation, which embodies more Aesthetic ideas, was never built and a more “Queen Ann” style façade exists today. This is the case because the Metropolitan Board of Works would not approve the first design. When discussing the final façade design, Godwin stated, “...the thing was pronounced charming. This is very sad.”¹⁹ The fact that he could not carry out

his design to the full extent upset Godwin. However, the original design is still recognized because of its innovation. The façade is an arrangement of rectangles with an off-center vertical window, a projecting balcony, and horizontal windows just below the roof line. All of these geometries were basic in Japanese designs, but were mixed with Godwin’s excellent sense of proportion.²⁰ Even though the plan dictated the placement of windows, the façade is still balanced.

CASE STUDY II

44 Tite Street House for Frank Miles by E.W. Godwin, 1878



19-1: Section



19-2: Interior Stair

The interior of the Frank Miles house contains even more Japanese motifs and influence. For example, the rooms have pale walls, wood floors with carpets and minimal furniture. Japanese forms and devices were more integral in the design then they appear now, but the patrons requested that Godwin not use as many Japanese motifs. All the furniture was also designed by Godwin, which has been described as “harshly rectilinear with minimal embellishment and decoration.”²¹ Susan Weber Soros excellently sums up the impact of Godwin’s designs, “Victorian artists lavishly appointed their working quarters with luxurious fabrics, elaborate pieces of furniture and profusion of antique casts, books and assorted bric-a-brac. In contrast, Godwin’s studios with their plain walls and uncluttered appearance prefigured the stark, light-filled studios of the twentieth century.”²²



THE SITE
The President Garfield Historic Site

The James A. Garfield National Historic Site is a 7.82-acre plot of land located in Northeast Ohio in the Cleveland suburb of Mentor. President Garfield purchased the land in 1876 and made some improvements and additions to the property up until his death in 1881. His wife, Lucretia, continued the updates throughout her life as well, with the last addition to the house in 1904. The family gave the property to the Western Reserve Historical Society in 1936, and finally became a National Historic Site in 1980. Since then, a visitor center was added to the existing carriage house and a small restroom building. Other historical structures include a campaign office, windmill, tenant house, chicken coop, horse barn, granary, and tenant house. The site is now open for tours and field trips as well as for summer markets, civil war reenactments, and other small group activities.



Existing Site Plan
N



Main House



Windmill



Carriage House



Tenant House



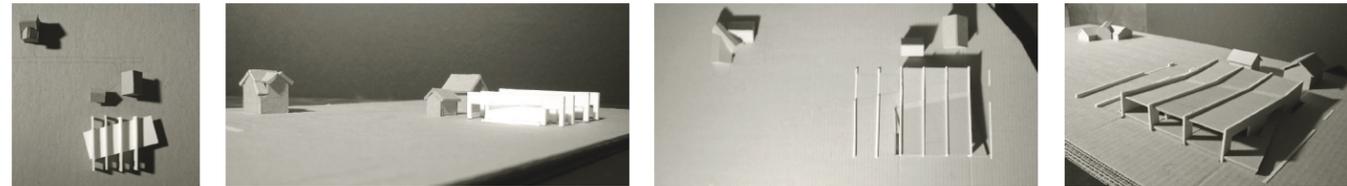
Granary



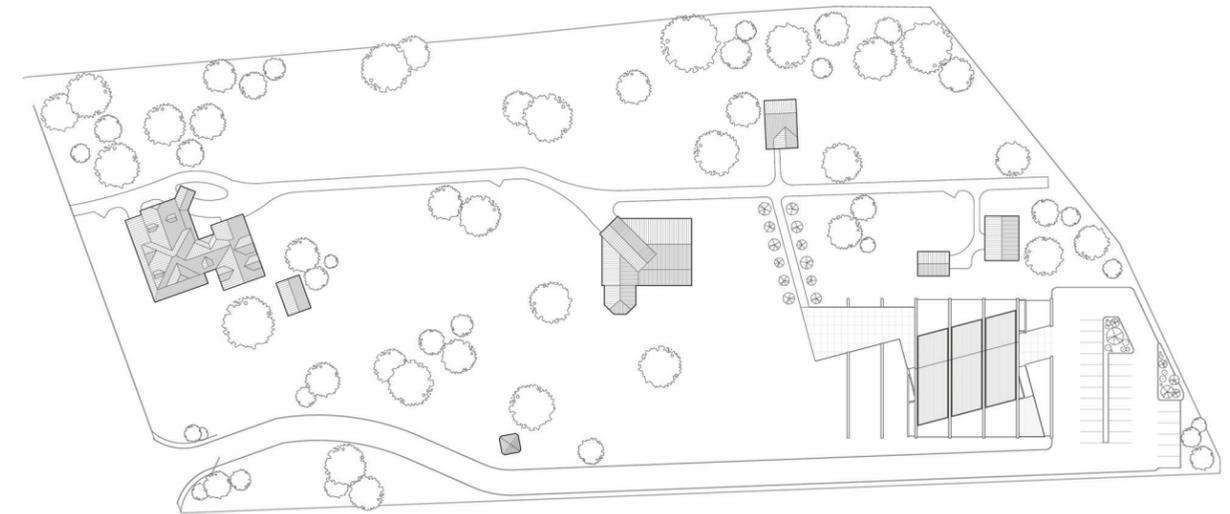
Horse Barn

EXISTING SITE AND BUILDINGS

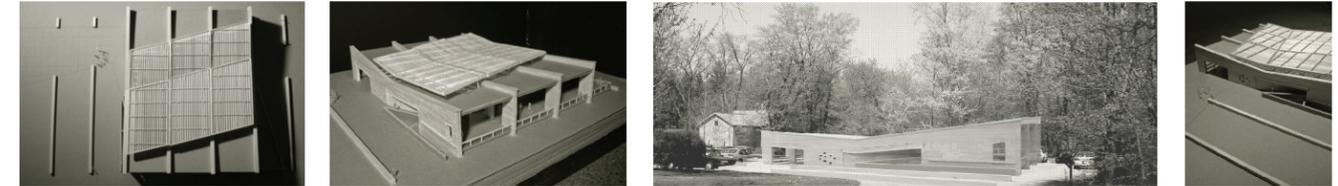
The new visitor center is to be located on the northeastern corner of the site. This location allows for a continuous area of historical buildings that would be uninterrupted by the new building and provide better circulation for the site. The existing restroom building and parking lot will be removed with those functions within or adjacent to the new visitor center. The four limestone walls of the new building line up with two of the existing buildings, the horse barn and granary, while the interior volume is rotated to the same axis as the main house. Flanking the new visitor center are three, low stone walls that act as a progression element from the new building to the historical buildings.



THE PROPOSAL

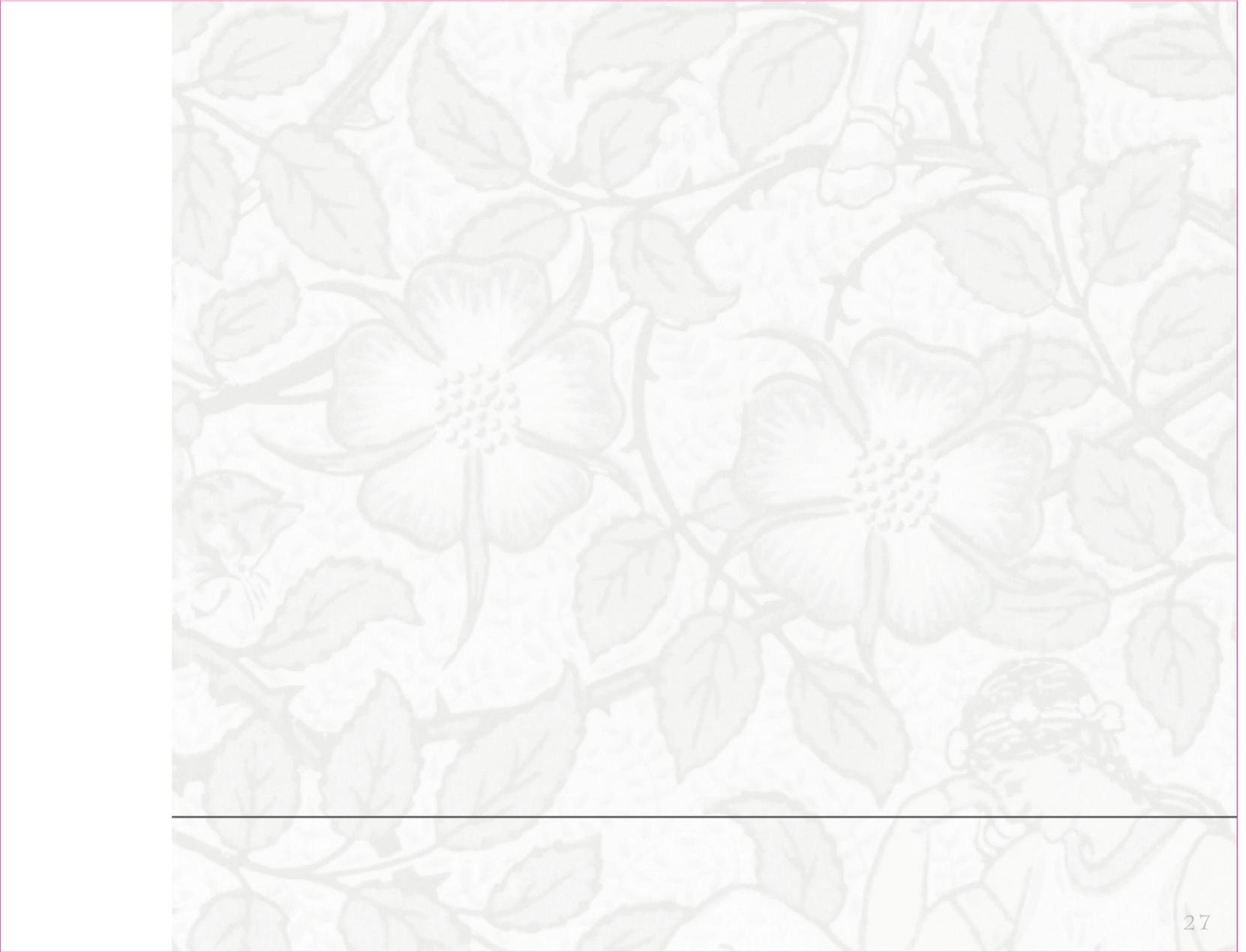


Proposed Site Plan
N

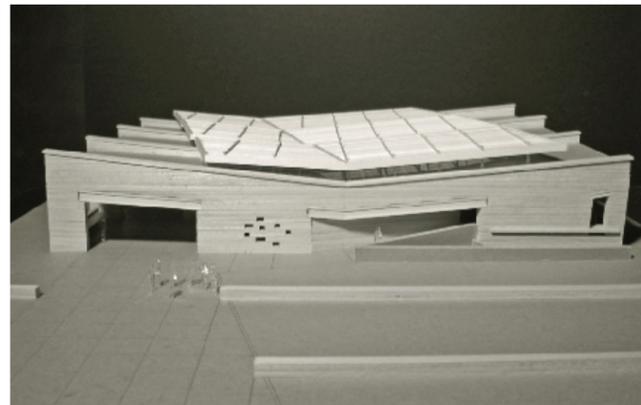




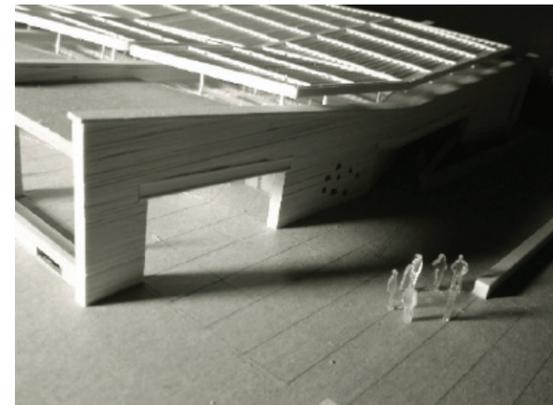
THE BUILDING
Plans, Sections, Elevations



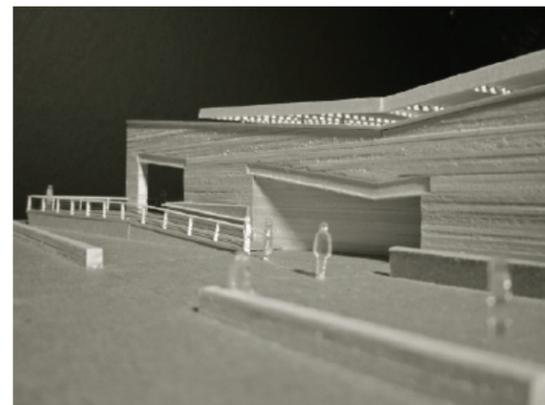
Approach



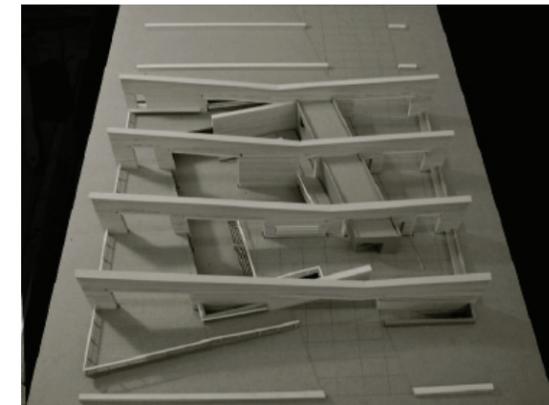
Outdoor Space



Entrance



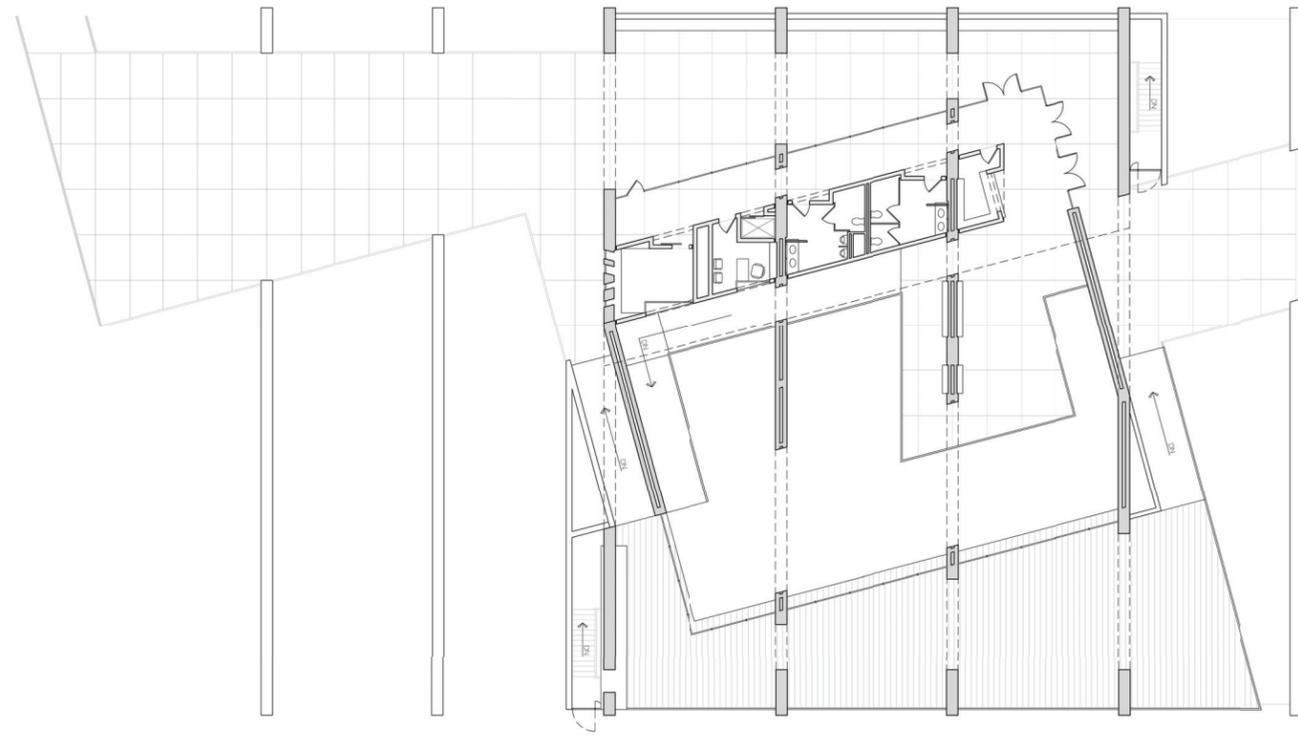
Model with no roof



PERSPECTIVES

The plan has many different levels that are visible to each other. The entry is on the ground level, whereas the exhibit space is below grade. From the museum shop that is adjacent to the ticket booth

and ramp, one can view the museum below. The ramp to the museum contributes to the dynamic quality by allowing for a slow progression down and through the walls. Restrooms, office and classroom are located

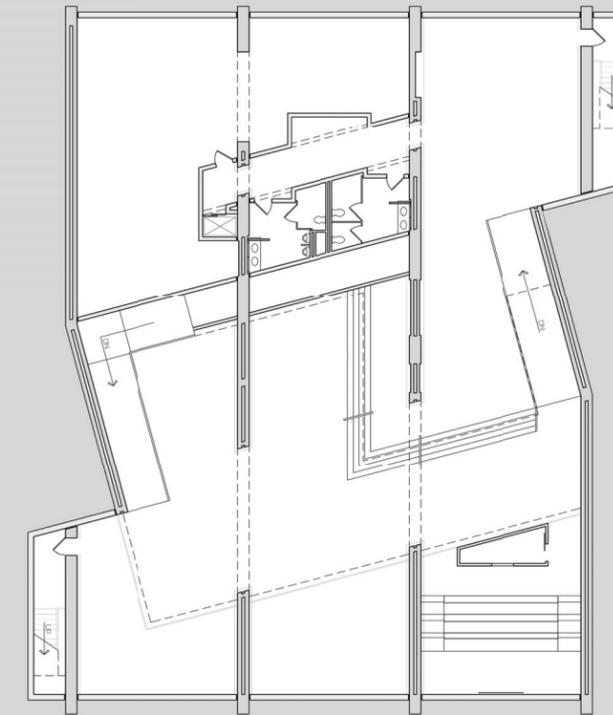


Ground Floor Plan
N

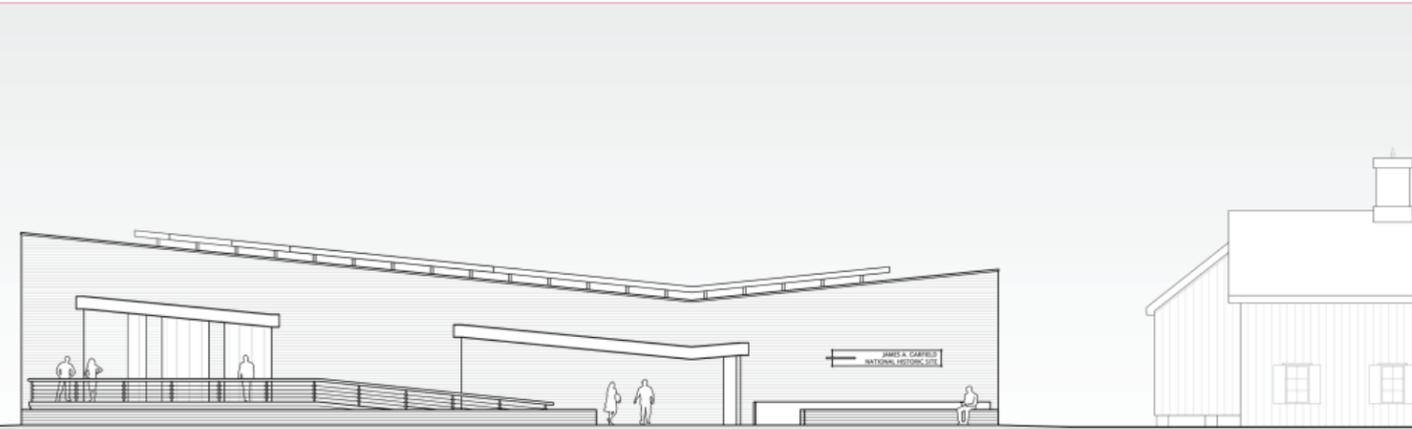
FLOOR PLANS

in the solid form that passes through the two middle stone walls while a screening room is located on the lower level. Exterior, yet covered spaces are located on the east and west ends of the buildings. The western

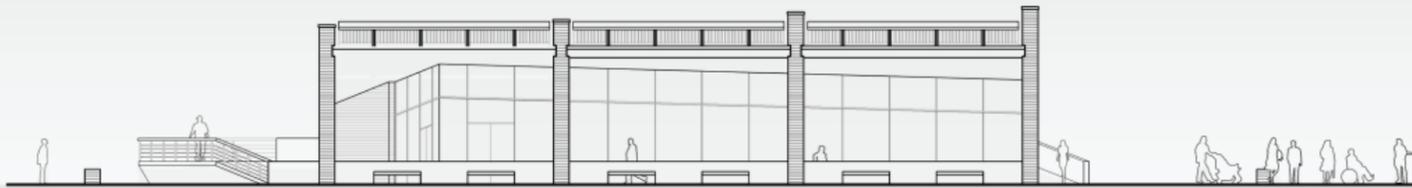
space flanks the entry and serves as a waiting area. The eastern space is three feet above grade and is accessible by two ramps. This area serves as a location for summer markets and other public gatherings



Lower Level Floor Plan



North Elevation

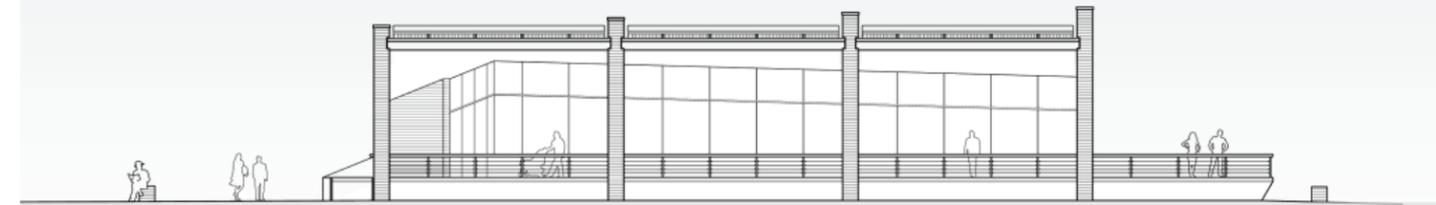


West Elevation

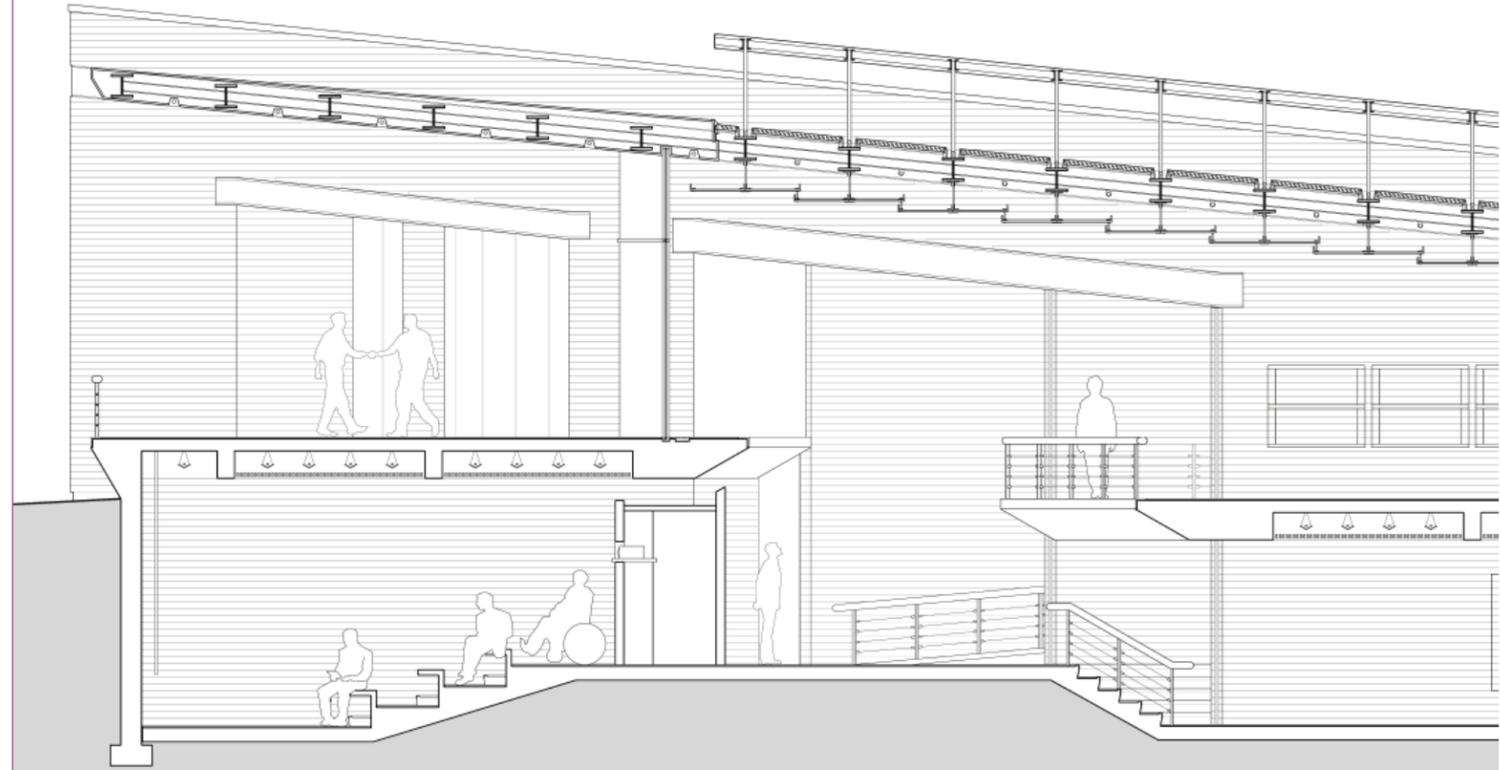
ELEVATIONS



South Elevation



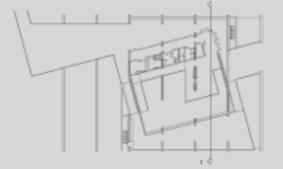
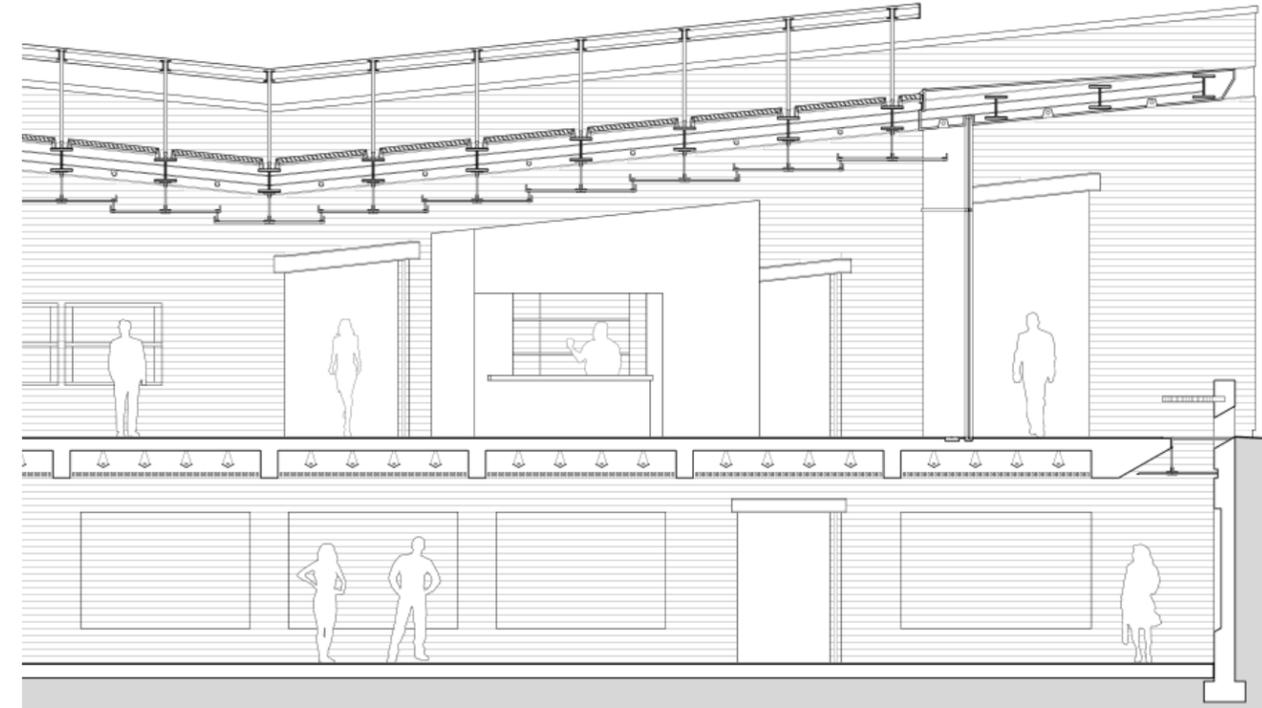
East Elevation

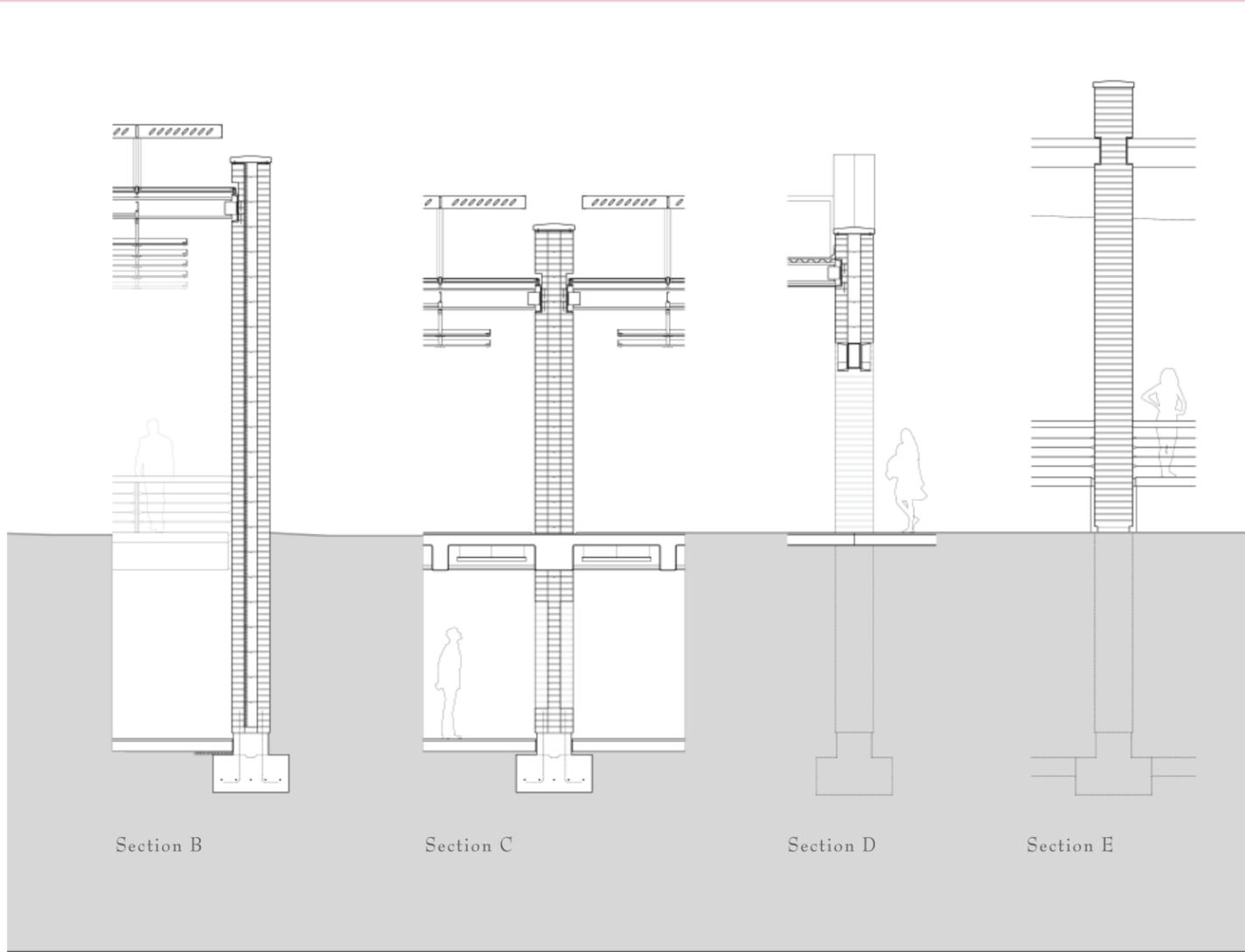
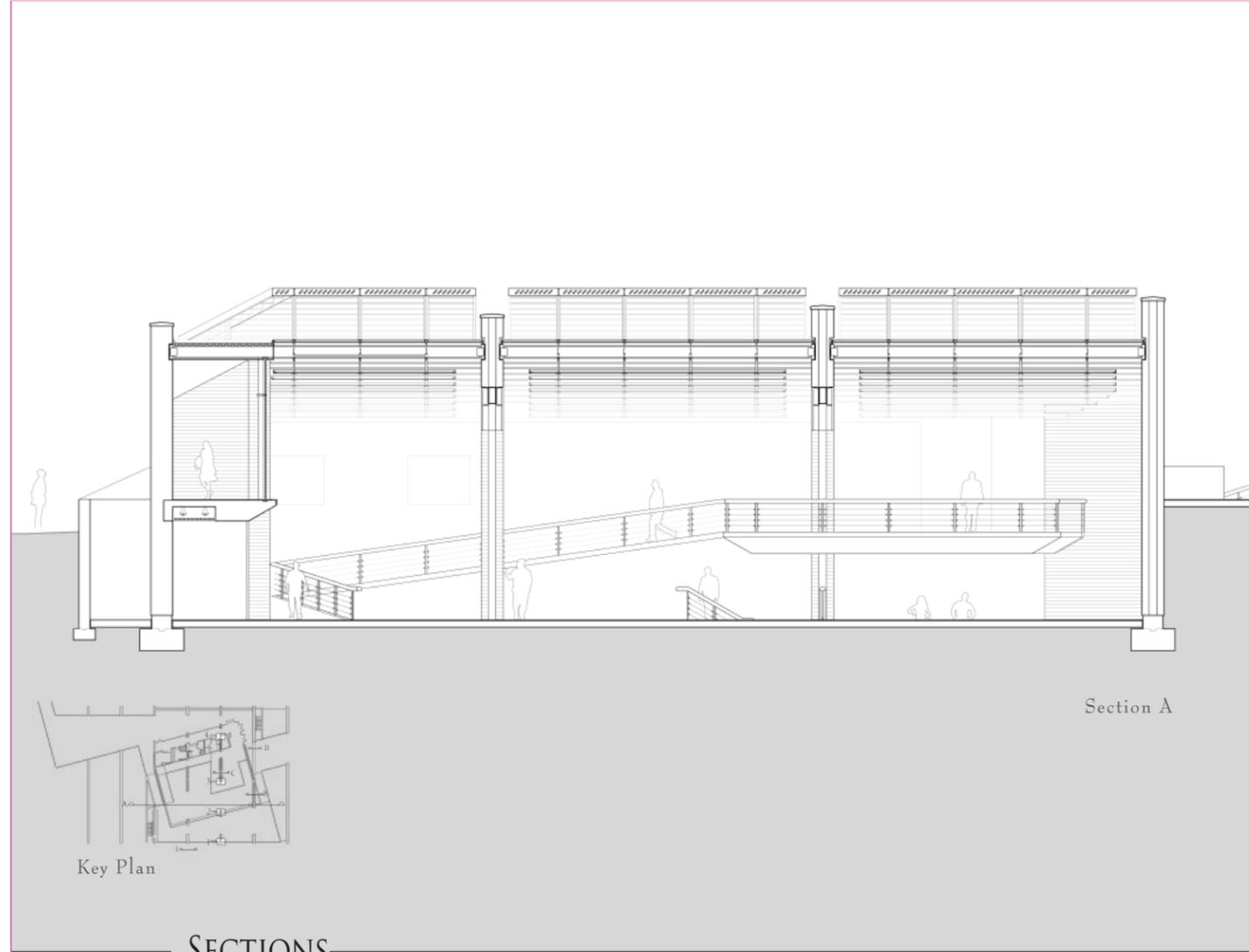


Section F

SECTION

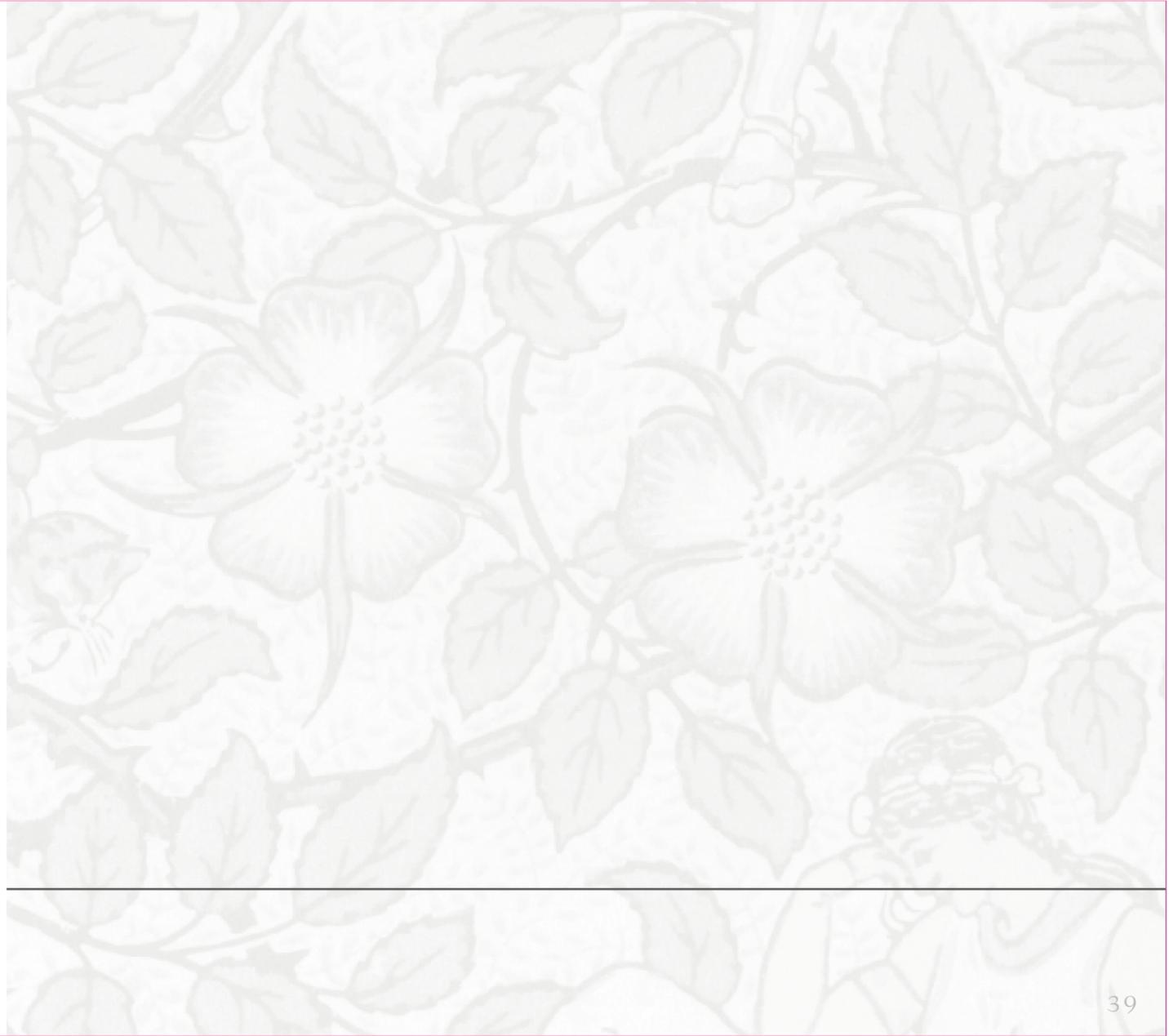
The form of the roof and walls butterfly to open up the interior, while horizontal lines are emphasized by the coursed stone.







COMPONENTS
Walls, Details, Roof System



Stone Walls, West end



Roof System and Stone Wall



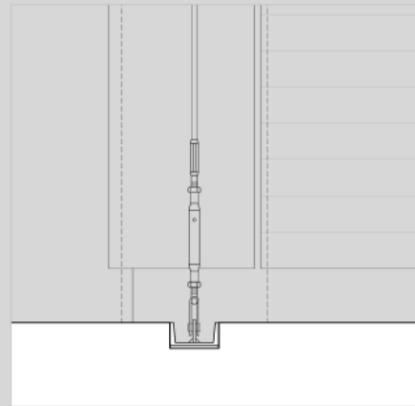
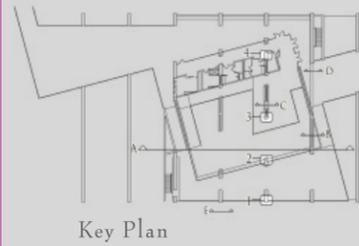
Entrance



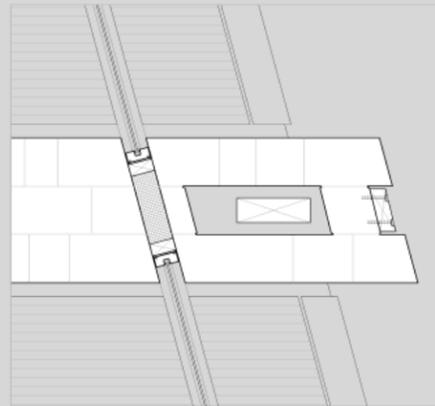
View into exhibit space from market level



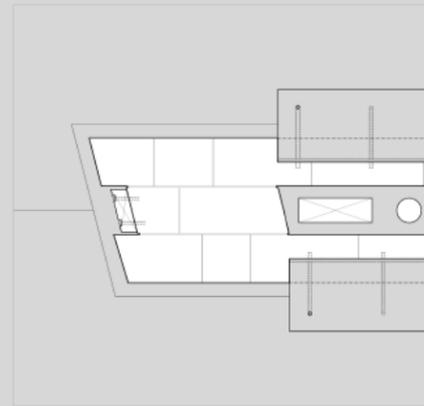
PERSPECTIVES



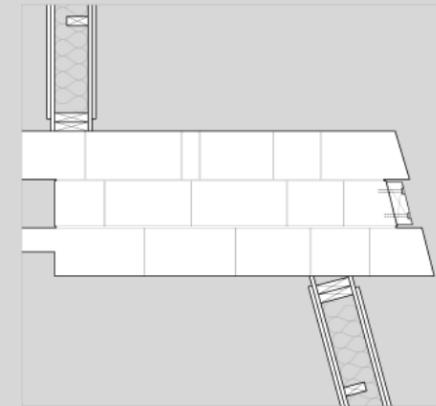
Detail 1- Handrail at Stone Wall



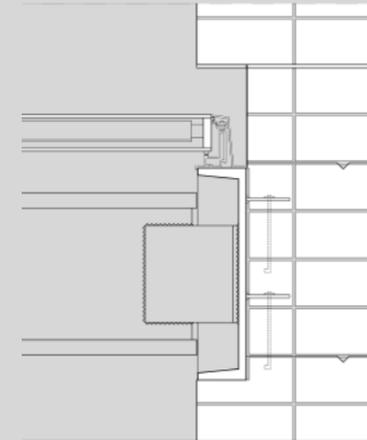
Detail 2- Glazing at Stone Wall



Detail 3- Stone Cavity Wall End Condition



Detail 4- Secondary Walls at Stone Walls



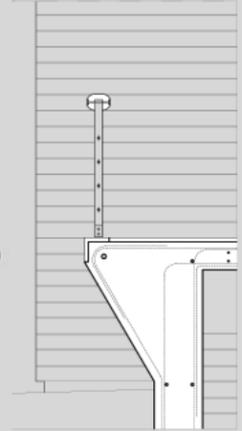
Detail 5- Beam & Wall Connection

Expression of the **honesty** of materials and structure is seen in the use of stone for its inherent compressive strength in the four limestone bearing walls. To aid the stone in spanning long distances over openings, steel is used because of its strength in crossing long distances. The walls are solid on the exterior while inside the building a cavity is placed within the wall for better thermal properties. On the ends of the wall, there is a reveal in the stone with a wood infill to express the void within the wall.

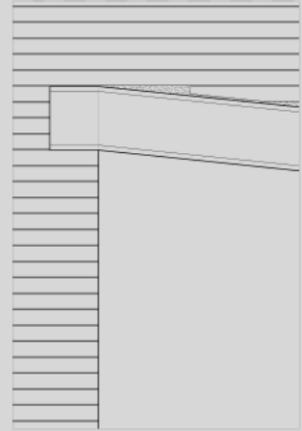
WALL DETAILS



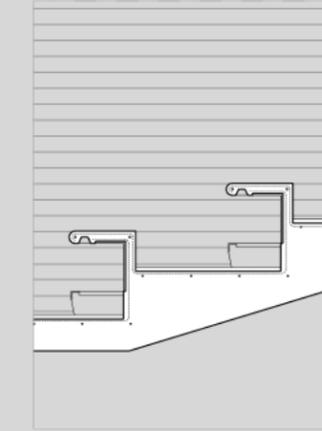
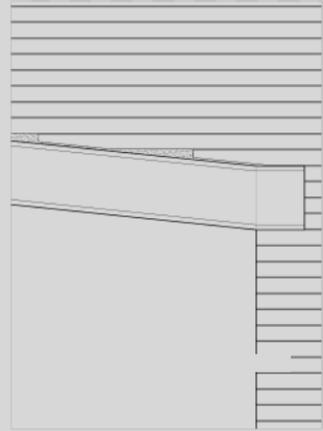
Key Section



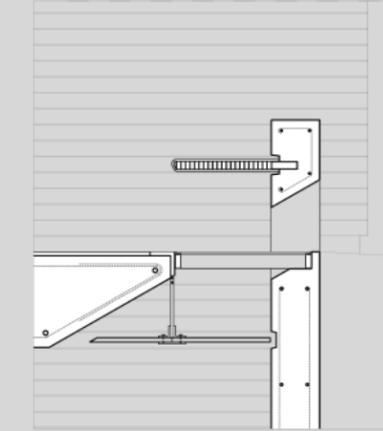
Detail 6- Handrail



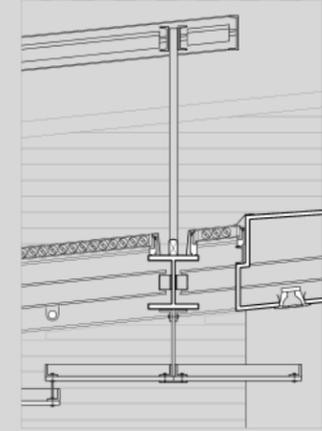
Detail 7 & 8- Top and Bottom of Steel Lintel



Detail 9- Seating in Screening Rm.

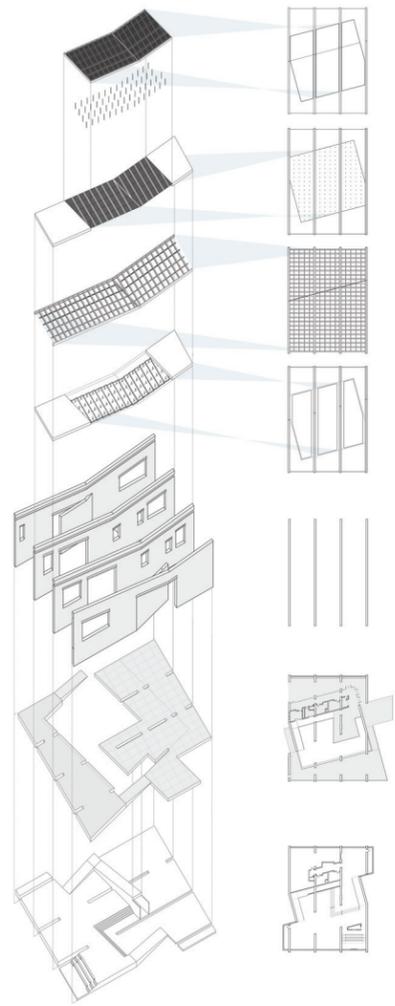


Detail 10- West Exterior Wall and Floor



Detail 11- Roof System

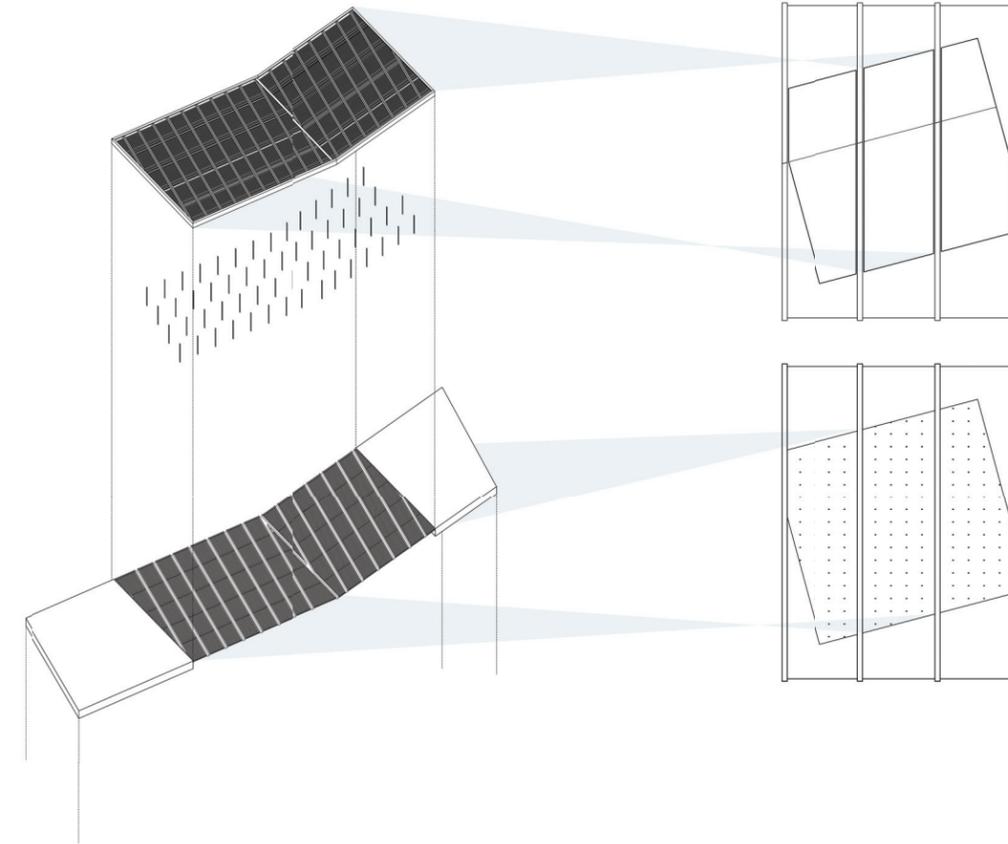
BUILDING DETAILS



The building has many levels for people and light, all contributing to the movement and dynamic quality of the building

ROOF LEVELS

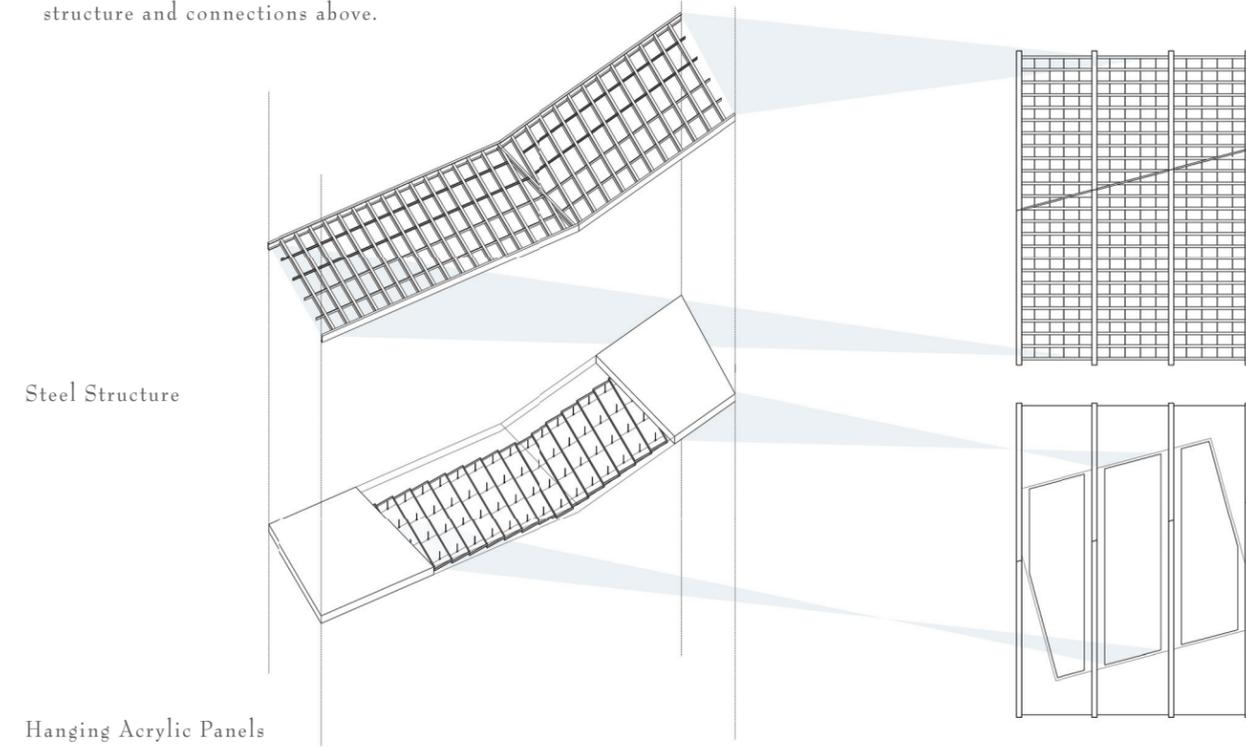
The fixed louvers block southern light while the operable louvers block sunlight from the east and west.



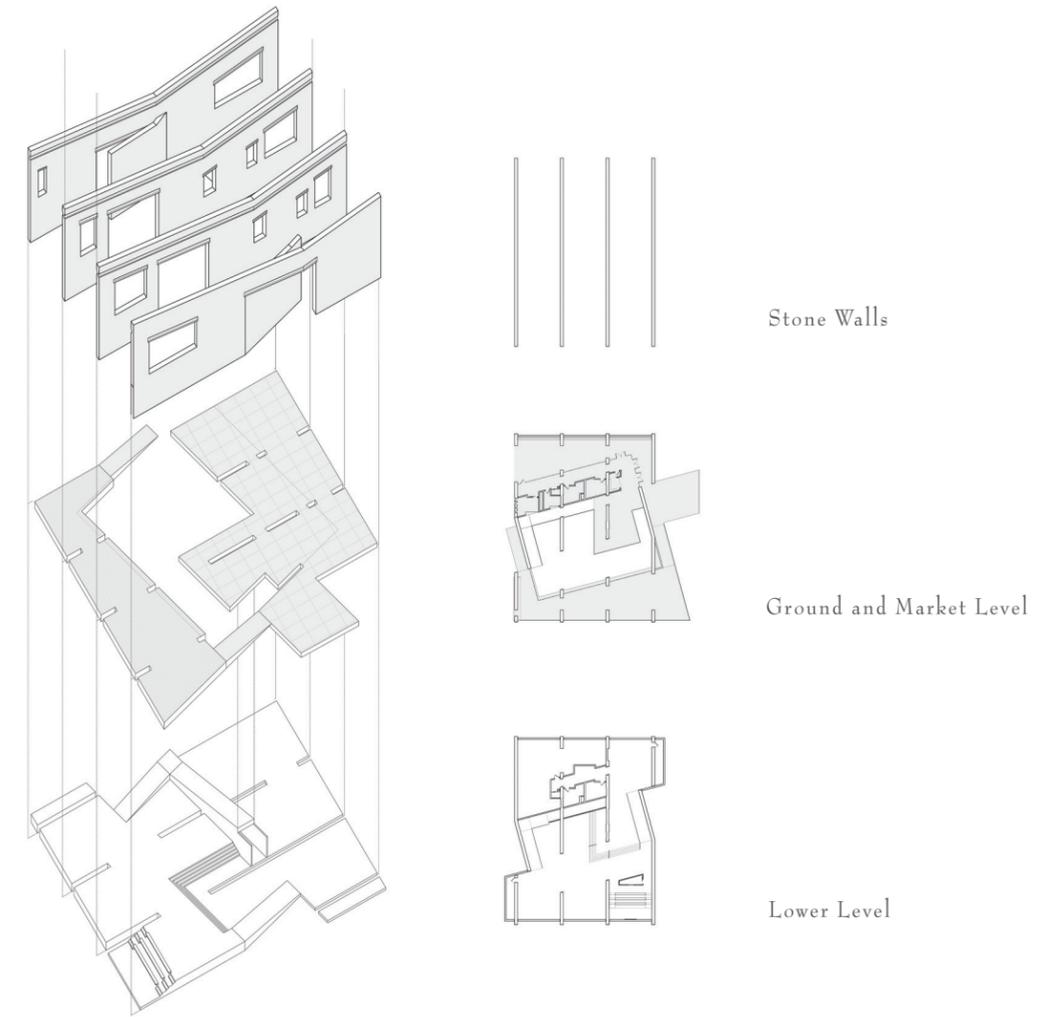
Fixed Louvers

Double Glazing with Operable Louvers

The hanging acrylic panels help diffuse the light even more. The panels are pulled away from the wall to express the structure and connections above.

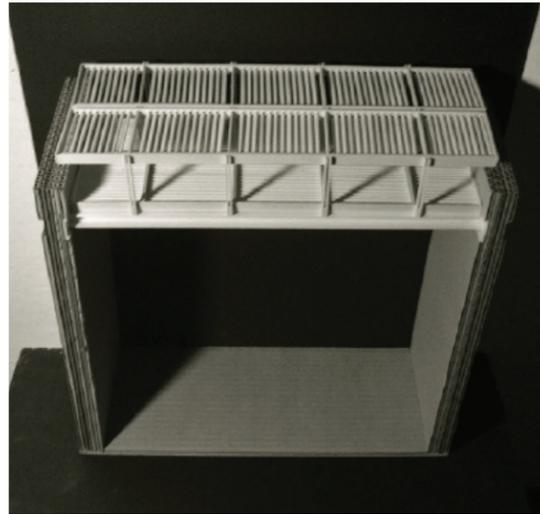


ROOF LEVELS



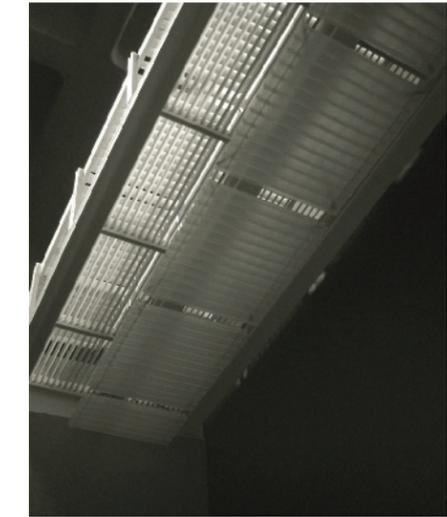
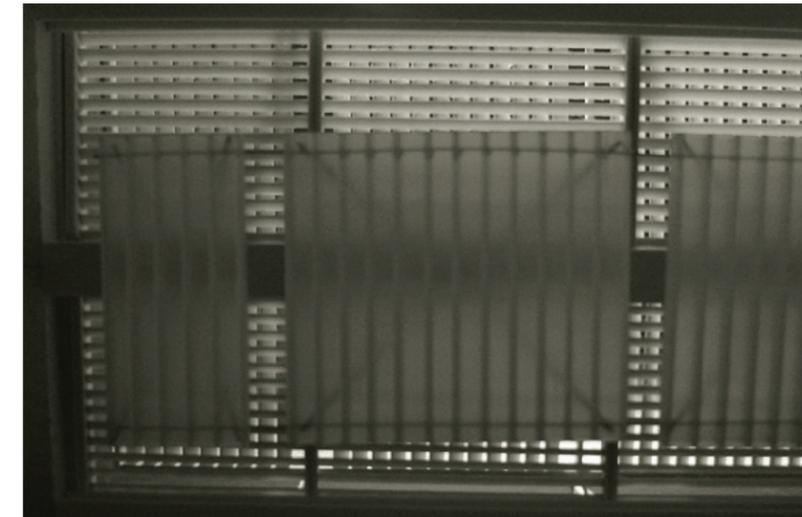
FLOOR LEVELS

A light study of the roof system was conducted to investigate the louver positions and the hanging panels.

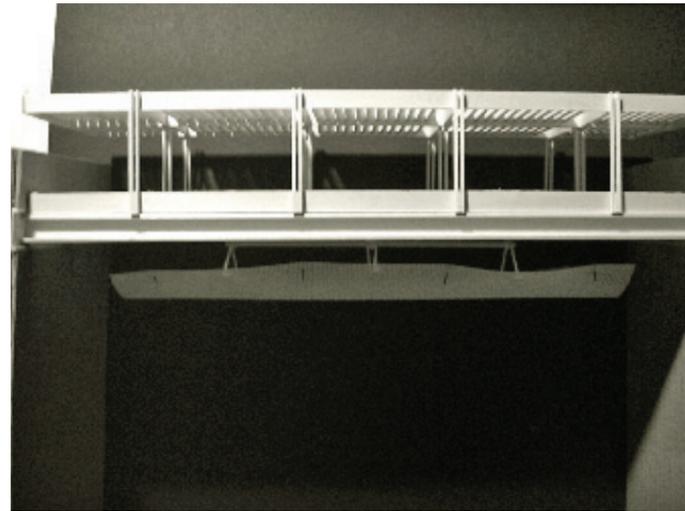


ROOF LIGHT STUDY

The first light study used cable hung, semi transparent panels with lines in a series of modules.

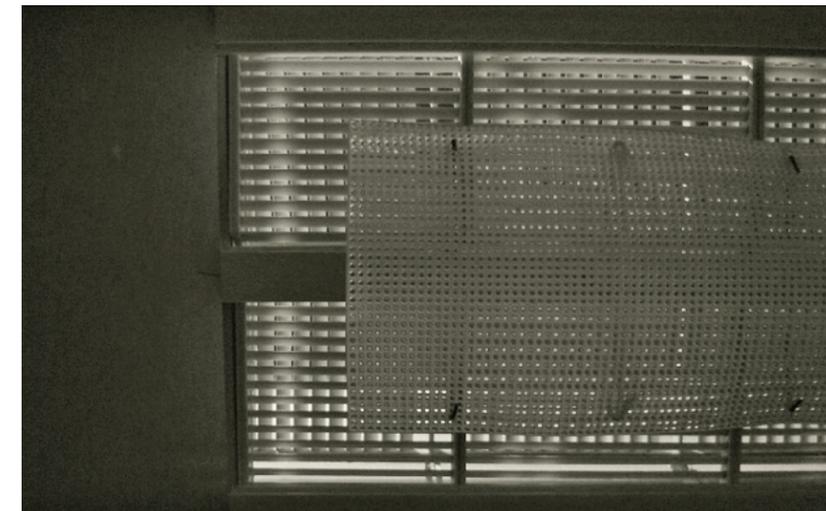


STUDY I



ROOF LIGHT STUDY

The second light study investigated the use of a continuous, curved, perforated metal panel.

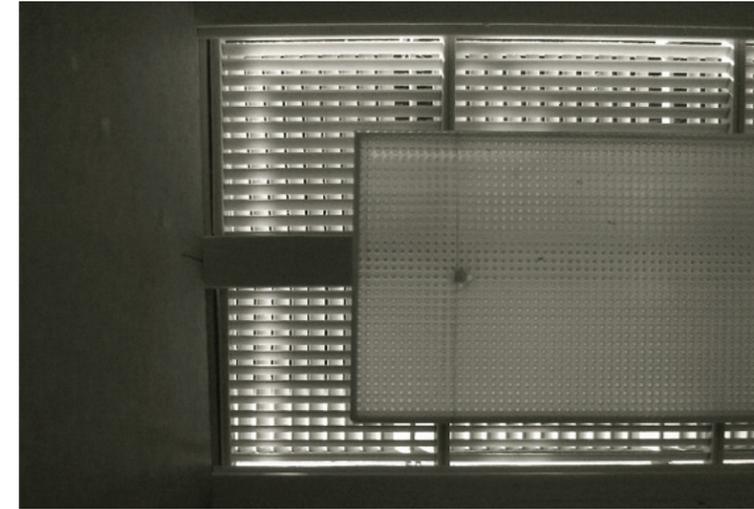


STUDY II

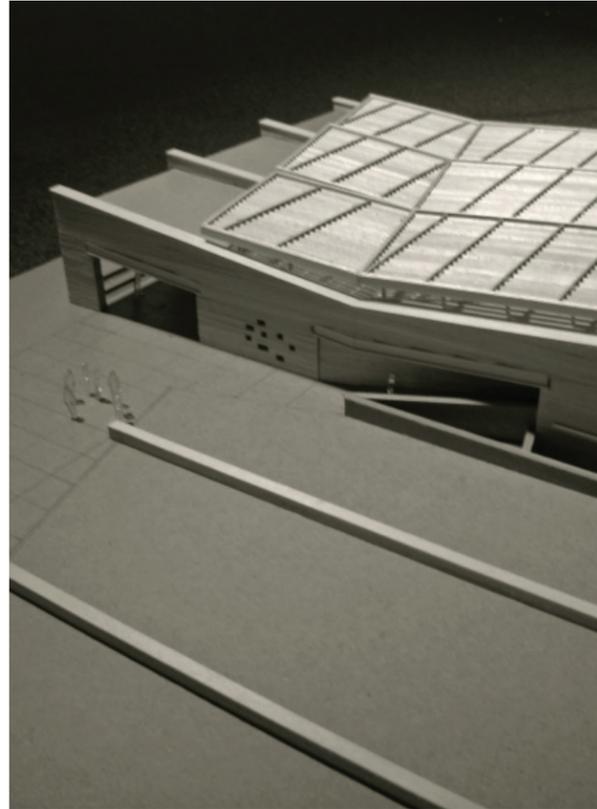


ROOF LIGHT STUDY

The third study used one long panel of semi-transparent acrylic and perforated metal. This study is what is used for the visitor center.



STUDY III



This thesis is not an application of Aesthetic ideals, but a continuation of those principles. Those ideals are taken into context within contemporary terms and are incorporated into the design. Horizontality, dynamic space, and honesty of structure all take part in contributing to the intent of the visitor center. The entire design does not encompass every aspect of the movement, but the ideas and philosophy behind visitor center is rooted in the Aesthetic standards.

CONCLUSION

¹ Hearn, Fil. *Ideas that Shaped Buildings*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA: 2003. z 255

² Hearn, idbd., p. 255

³ Hearn, idbd., p. 256.

⁴ Hearn, idbd., p. 256.

⁵ Aslin, Elizabeth. *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau*. Praeger, New York: 1969. p 33.

⁶ Aslin, ibid., p 111.

⁷ Aslin, ibid., p 111.

⁸ Stein, Roger B. "Artifact as Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement in Its American Cultural Context." *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*. Rizzoli, New York: 1986. p. 25.

⁹ Watanabe, Toshio. "Japonisme." *Crafts*. V.173 (2001): 42-5. p. 42.

¹⁰ Kornwolf, James D. "American Architecture and the Aesthetic Movement." *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*. Rizzoli, New York: 1986. p. 351.

¹¹ Kornwolf, ibid., p. 351.

¹² Hearn, op.cit., p. 223.

¹³ Hearn, ibid., p. 223.

¹⁴ Suzuki, Hiroyuki. Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Japan Art & Culture Association, Tokyo: 1985. p. 126

¹⁵ Kaplan, Wendy. *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*. Abbeville Press, New York: 1996. p. 237.

¹⁶ Howarth, Thomas. *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*. Wittenborn Publications, New York: 1953. p. 158.

¹⁷ Howarth, ibid., p. 160.

¹⁸ Howarth, ibid., p. 160.

¹⁹ Wilkinson, Nancy. "E.W. Godwin and Japonisme in England." *E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*. Yale University Press, New Haven: 1999. p. 88.

²⁰ Wilkinson, ibid., p. 89.

²¹ Soros, Susan Weber. "E.W. Godwin and Interior Design." *E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*. Yale University Press, New Haven: 1999. p. 213.

²² Soros, ibid., p. 213.

All photographs by the author except:

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Nerissa McCoy

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