

Books Balls and Walls

Graduate Thesis - Mt. Vernon Library and Recreation Center

Books Balls and Walls

Mt. Vernon Recreation Center

By

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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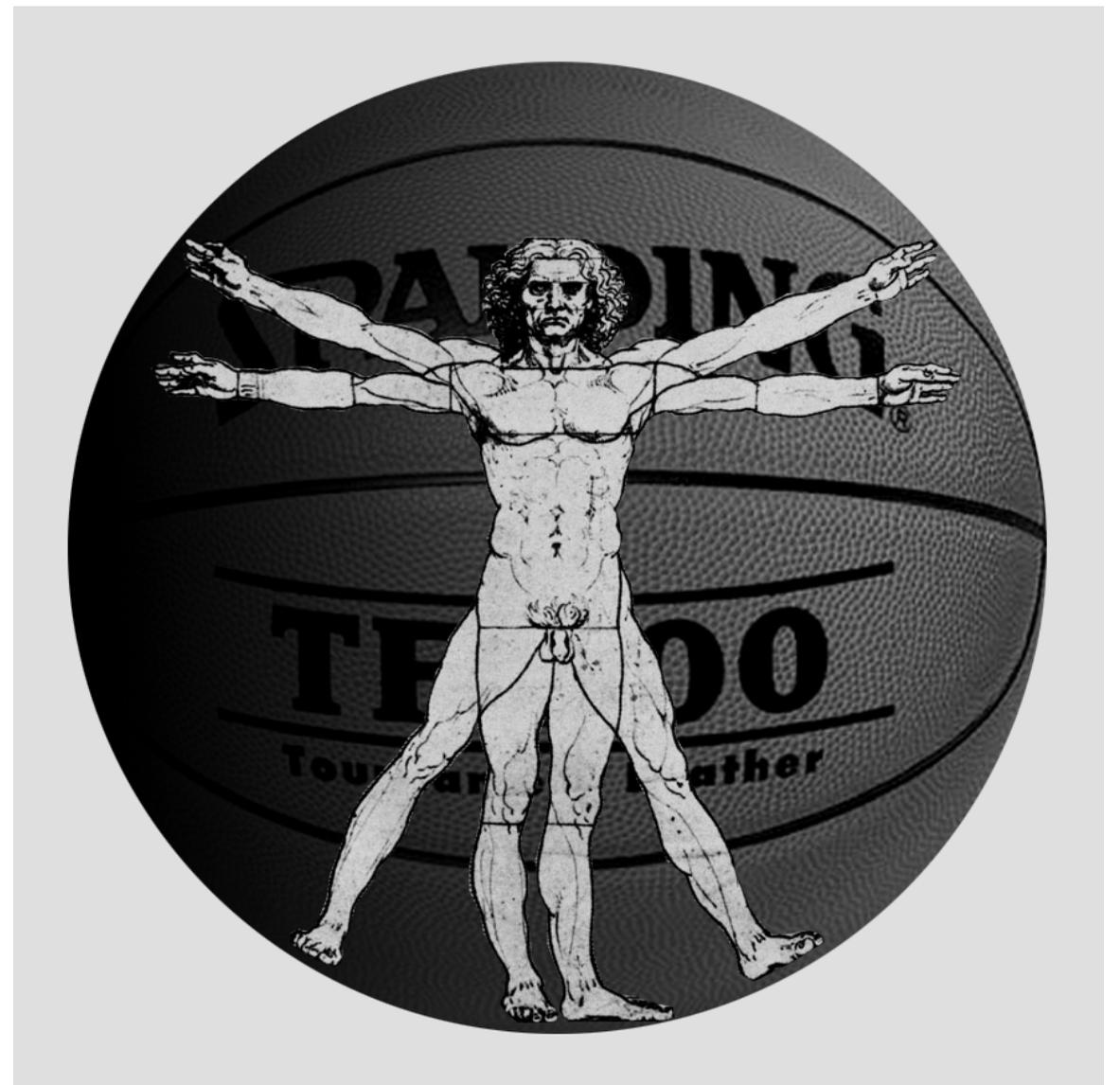


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Abstract

“A significant work of architecture is never the product of a single individual. It is always a collaboration with history and tradition, with the silent wisdom of the discipline of architecture. An architect who understands the essence of his craft accepts his role as a builder of a tradition, and he places his work in the context of this continuum with combined humility and pride.”

Juhani Pallasmaa



Acknowledgements

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Next, I would like to thank my parents for their encouragement and optimism, without which the project would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank those who contributed to this work in ways that were sometimes humorous, sometimes strange, and at all times welcome; Evan Mann, Charlie McSorley, John White, Mathew Sellers, Charles Ellinwood and David Oviedo.



Precedent

In beginning this project I looked at the Baths of Caracalla, built outside of Rome in A.D. 212-216, as an example of a recreation center that has stood the test of time.

1. Entrance (male and female)
2. Changing room
3. Excercise court
4. Fridgidarium
5. Tepidarium
6. Cladarium
7. Furnace
8. Athletic grounds

It is desirable to note how in these vast establishments space is economized, how the constructive masses are hollowed when this can be done without sacrifice of solidity, and how the interior configuration of the plan is adapted to its destination.....the whole together forms but one building, like a hive composed of cells of various sizes. Here it is that the Roman genius exhibits itself; here the Roman is himself and borrows from no one.

Voillet Le-Duc

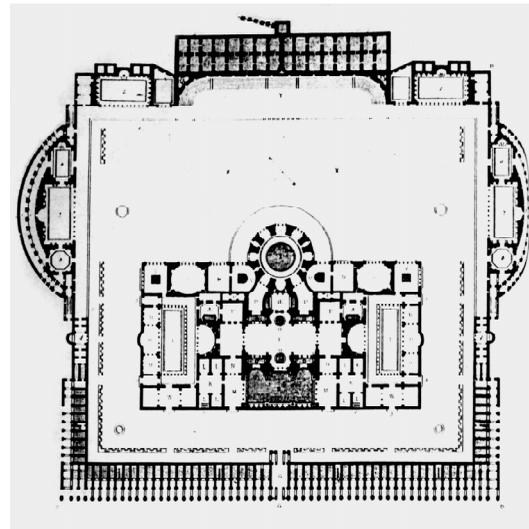


Image 2. Site Plan

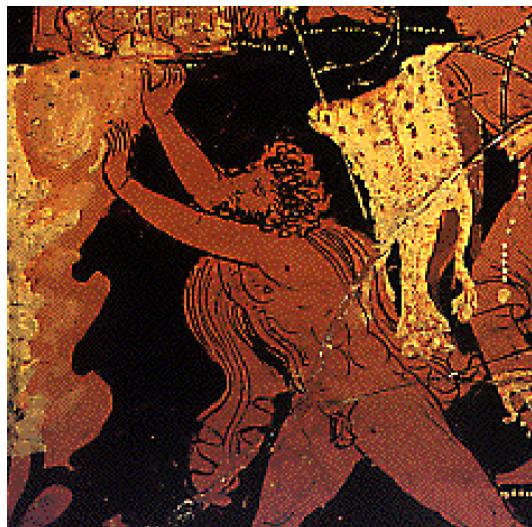


Image 1. Sisyphus

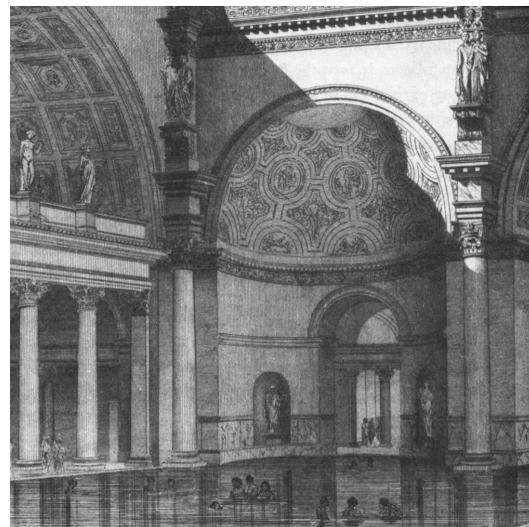


Image 3. View of frigidarium

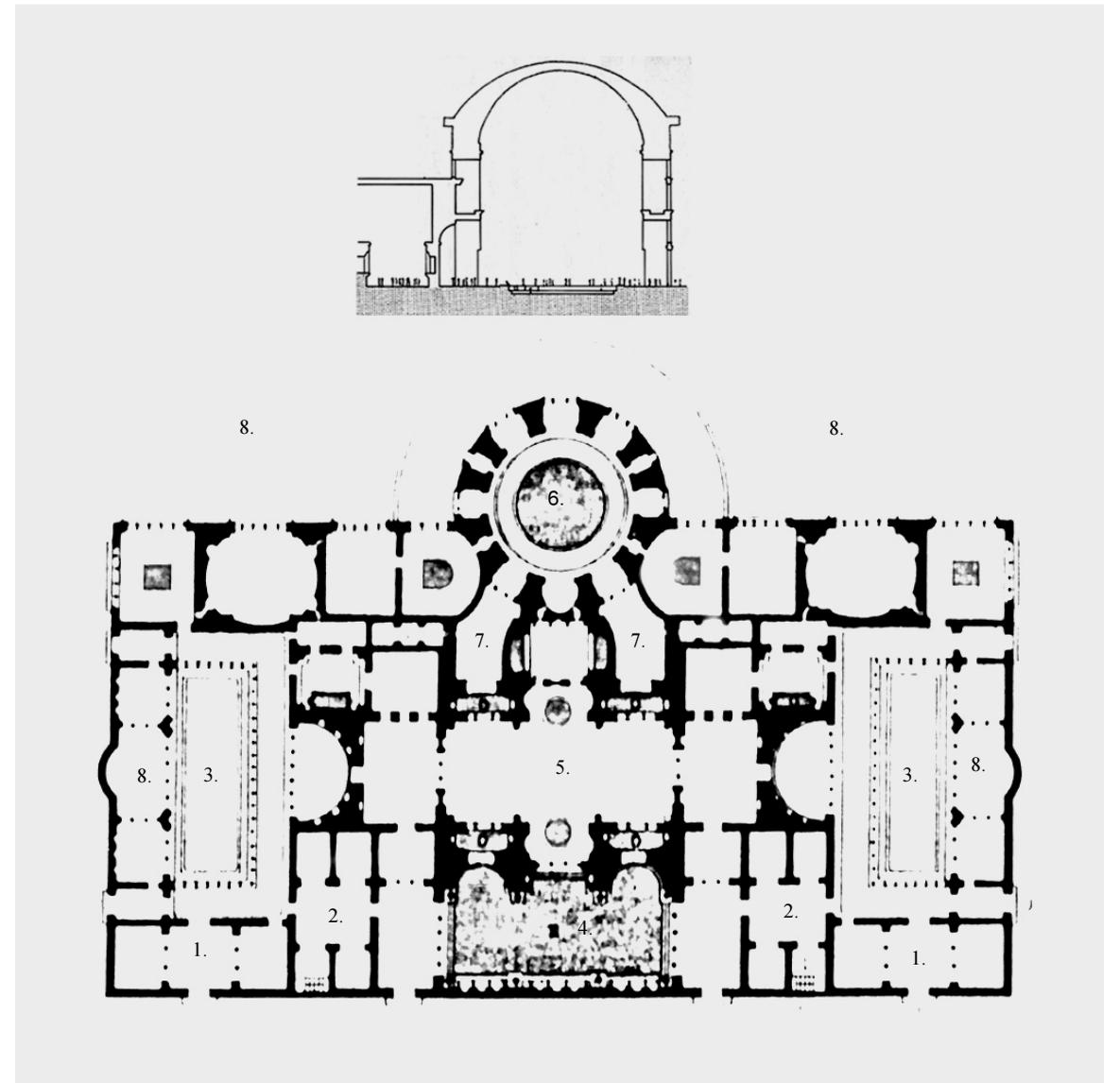


Image 4. Plan of Baths and Section thru the Caldarium

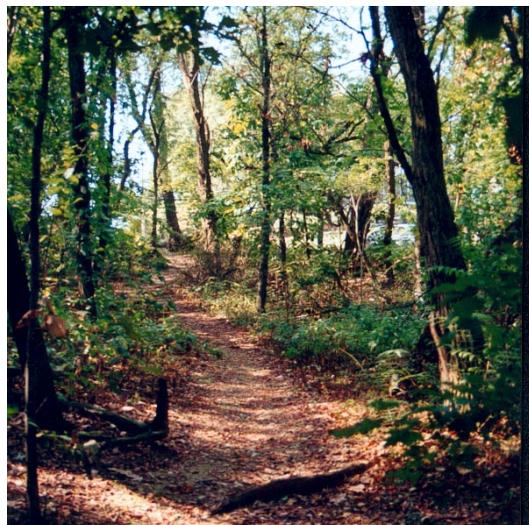
Site

The site is in Fairfax County, Va, two miles south of Old Town Alexandria and one mile west of the Potomac river. An ice rink, swimming pool and library exist on a sloping site with wooded parkland to the south. Across the street is an elementary school and a strip mall.



- 1. Swimming Pool & Ice rink
- 2. Library
- 3. Elementary School
- 4. Shopping Center

Site Plan with existing buildings. Scale: 1"=500'



Path in the woods.



Standing at the top of the hill.



The existing library.



Looking at the top of the hill.

Studies

The new program proposes a recreation center with a swimming pool, ice rink, and gymnasium as the main focus, and other sports such as raquetball, tennis, weightlifting, karate, aerobics and rock climbing.

The beginning study model experiments with walls stepping down the hill to form terraces.

The second model tries a repetition of walls that step down the hill parallel to the contours while keeping a constant elevation at the top. This results in rooms of varying heights appropriate to the wants of the various sports.

The parallel orientation of the walls allowed the roofs to move back and forth, opening the rooms below to the sky. The seasonal possibilities offered by this event might include swimming under the stars or ice skating in the snow.



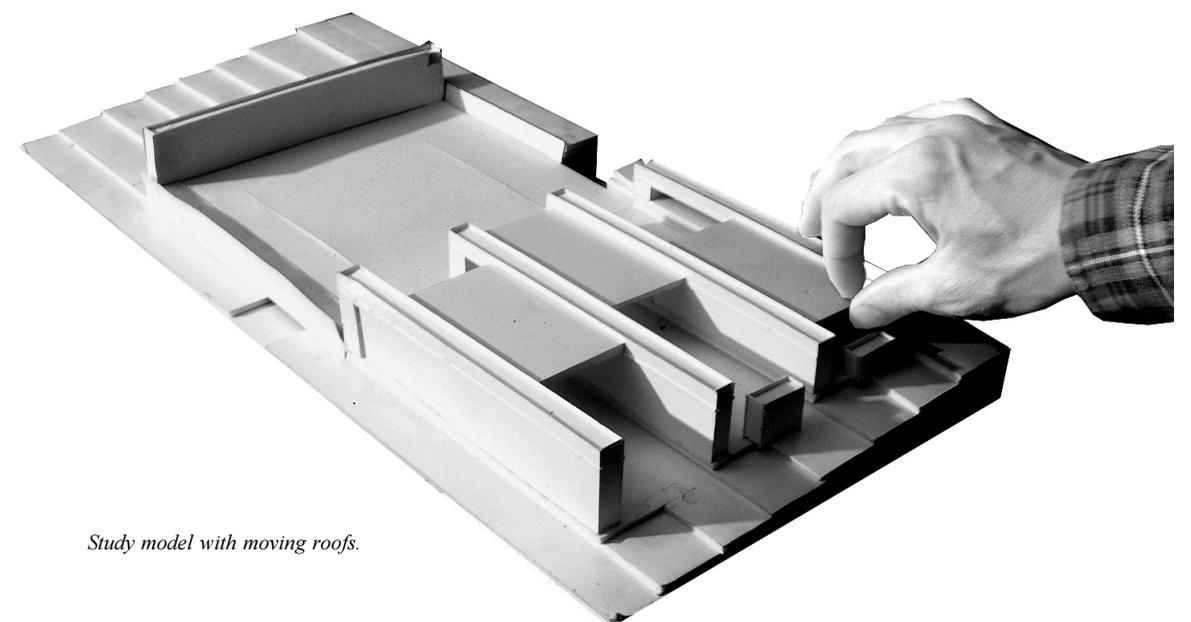
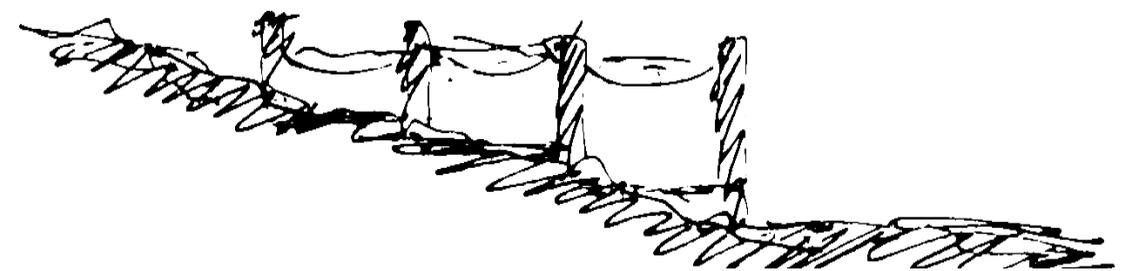
Concept sketch.



Image 5. Moving roof at Safeco feild, Seattle 1999



Study model with terraces. Rejected for being "too cuddly".

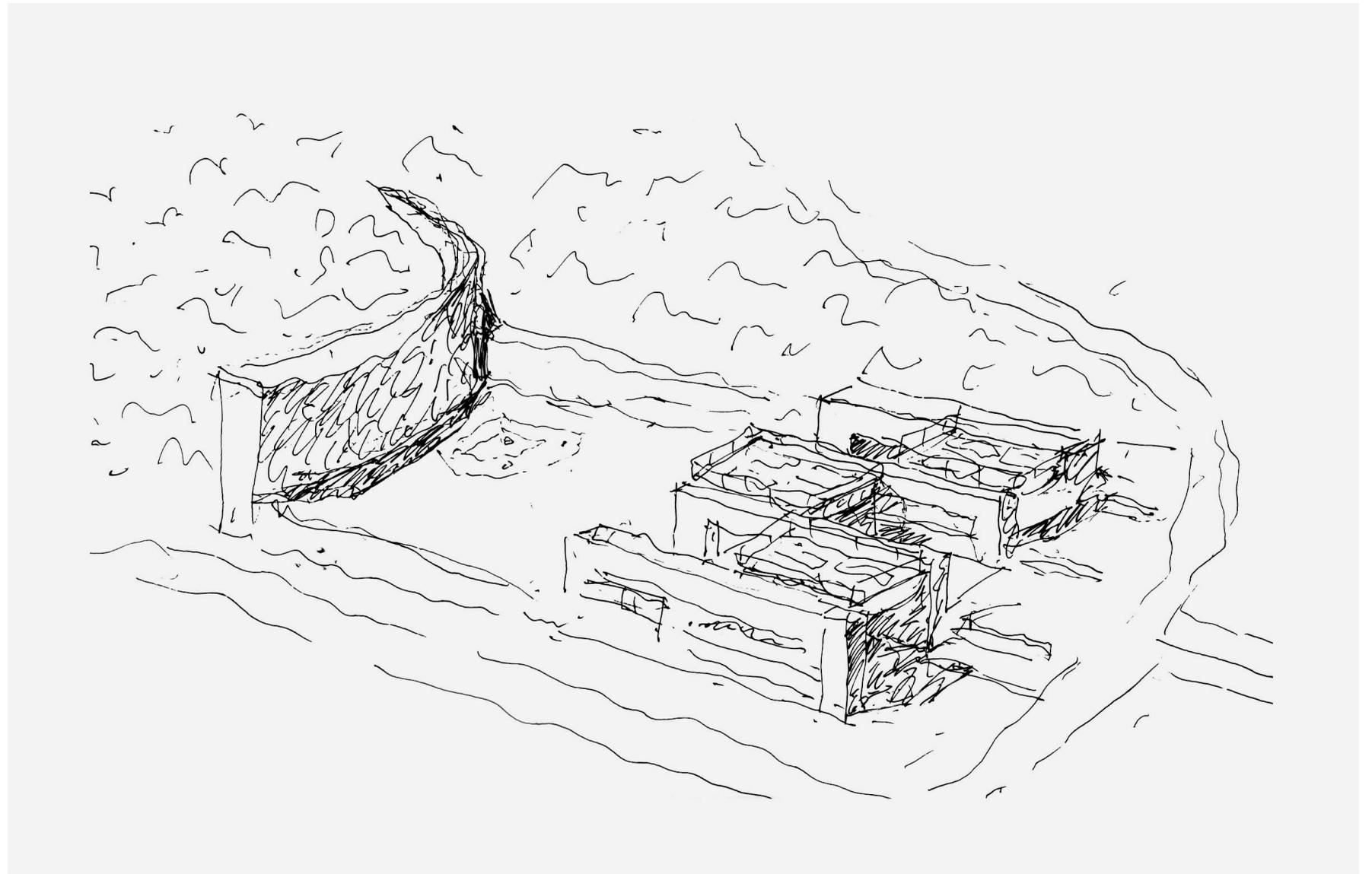


Study model with moving roofs.

Studies

When looking at the building and its relationship to the site various questions were raised. How do you access the building by car? How do you access the building by foot? How do you walk around the building if you are going to the shopping center from your house? What can the building offer to the school across the street? What can the building offer to the adjacent parkland? What can the building offer to the neighbors other than just being a health club?

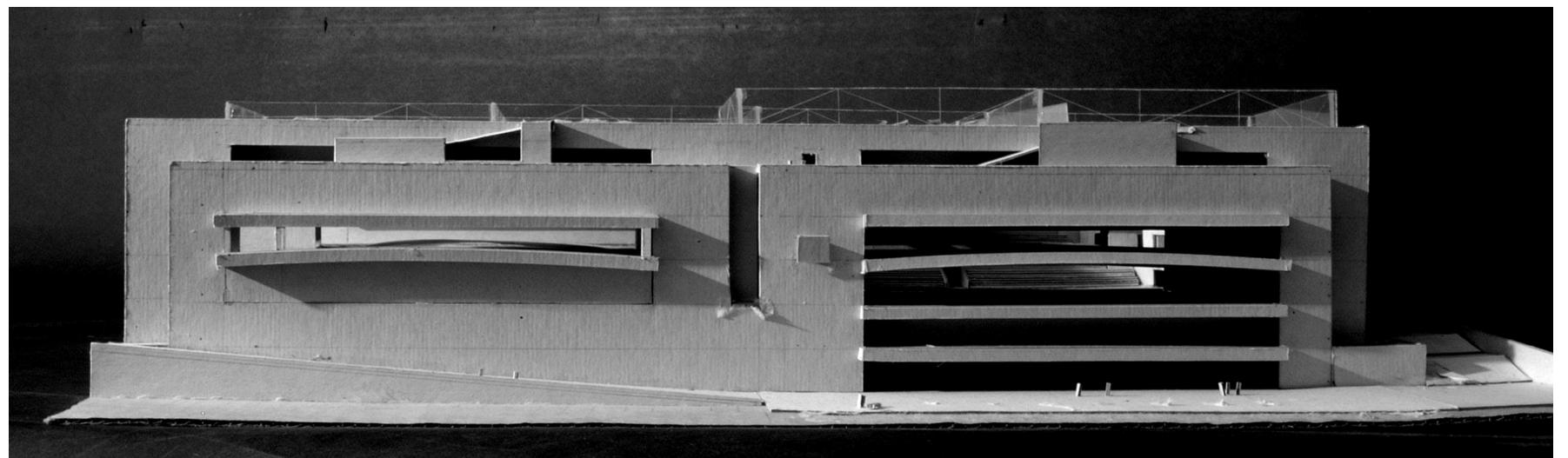
These questions were addressed throughout the evolution of the work and are evident in the final design.



Sketch with curved climbing wall.

To experience architecture is like going through the ages painting a self-portrait of our spiritual thoughts and feelings. To be part of a power that is so strong that only you can appreciate its qualities and assure the continuation of existence. Architecture has no age but lives eternally once created. Architecture has no language except the spiritual language of its participants, and their ability to inspire on another.

Sverre Fehn



Facade study.

Studies

What's marvelous about a room is that the light that comes through the windows of that room belongs to the room. And the sun somehow doesn't realize how wonderful it is until after a room is made. So somehow man's creation, the making of a room, is nothing short of the making of a miracle.

Louis Kahn



Study sketch.



Image 6. Hagia-Sophia. (532-37)

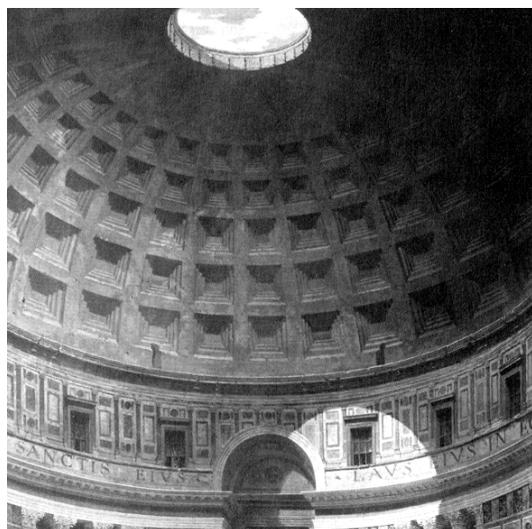
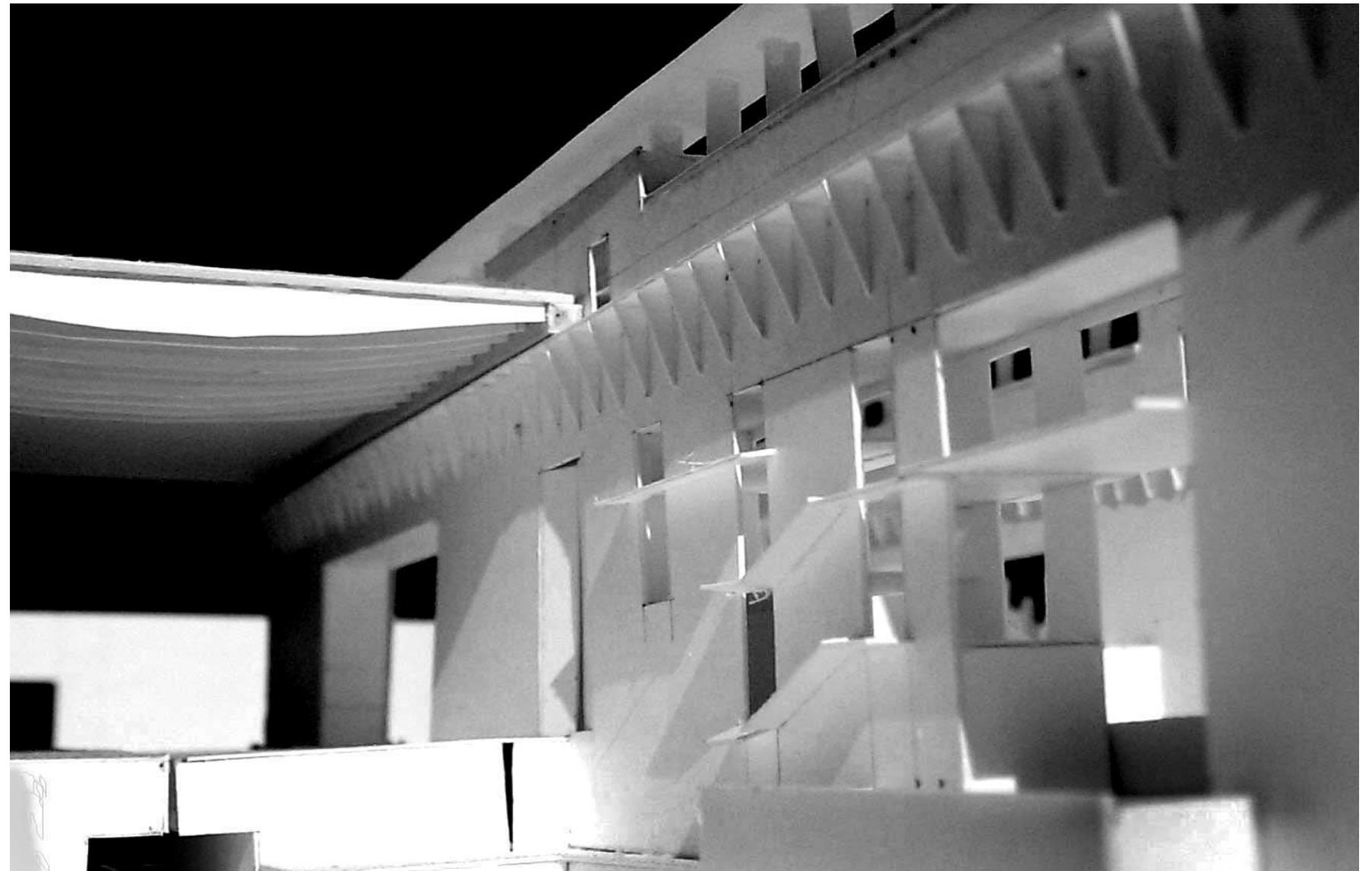


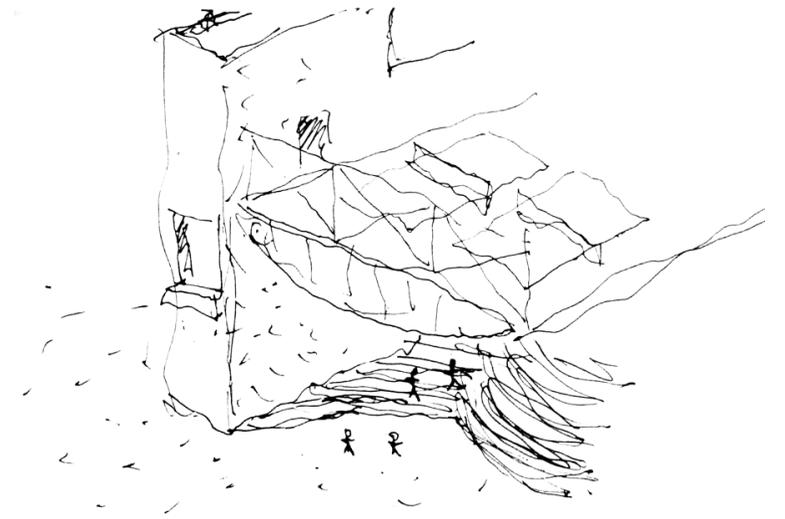
Image 7. Pantheon. (A.D. 120-127)



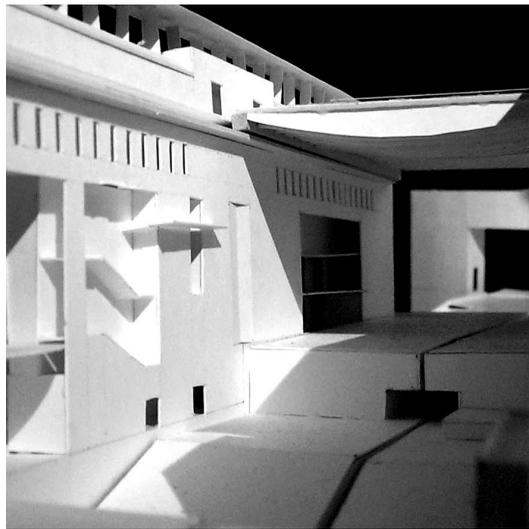
Study Model.

Studies

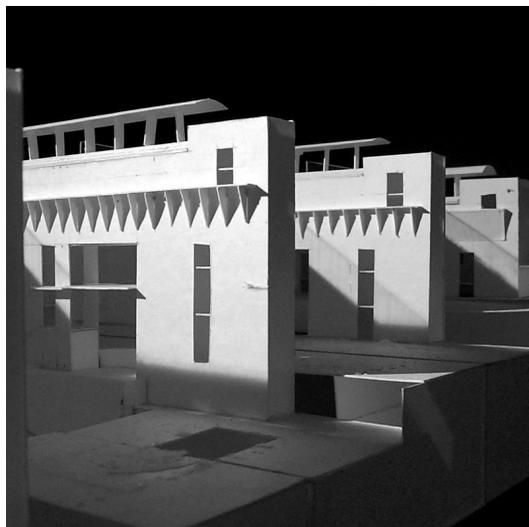
When these walls were made I had only a vague idea of what to put inside them. I only knew that the walls had to deal with light. I also knew that the space between the walls were not empty, but were filled with light and shadow. In a sense, light is the key element in the design.



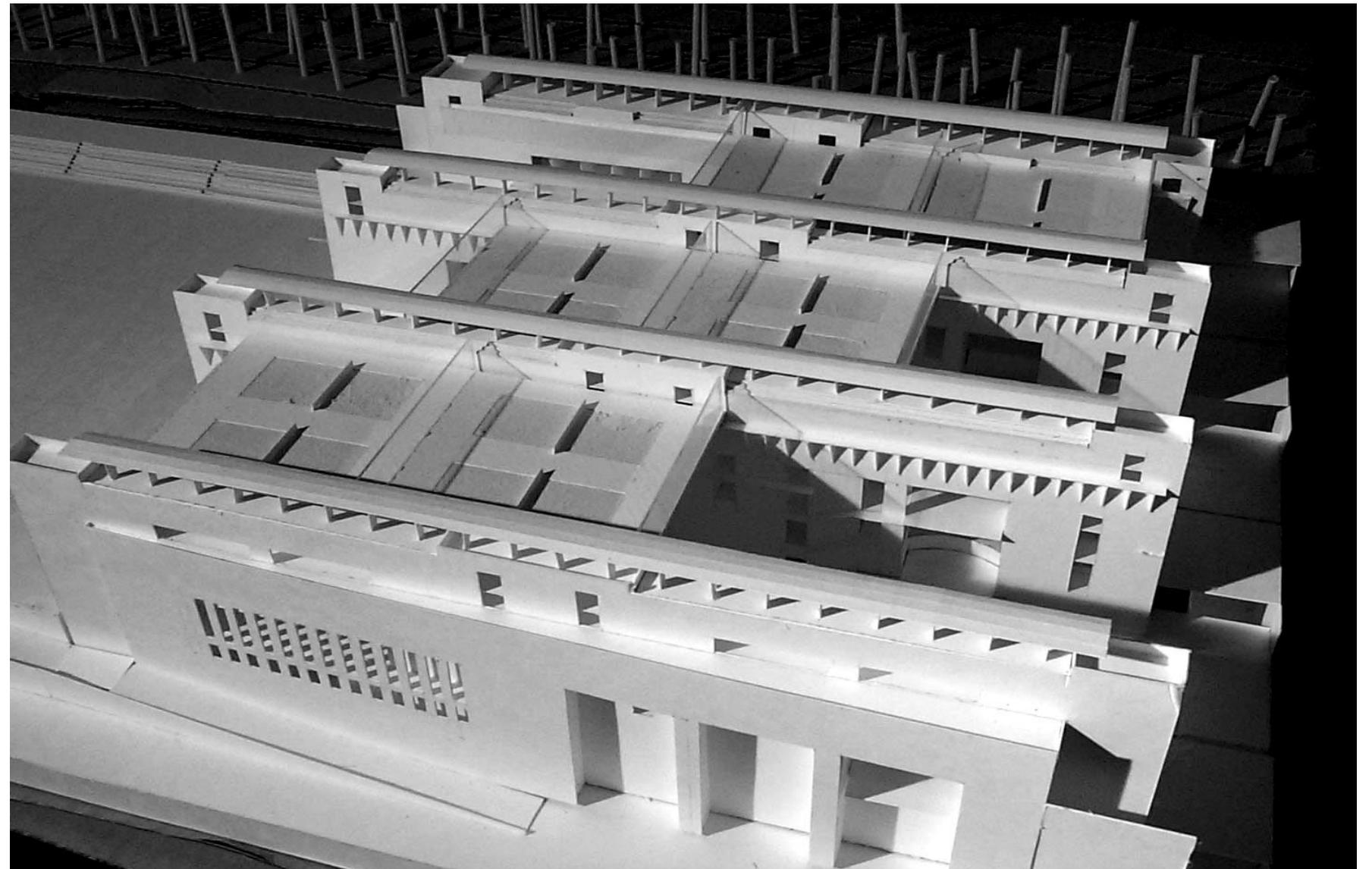
Roofs over the field can provide a shady area on a hot day.



Study model



Study model



Study model

Studies

And that is the beauty of our work in that it deals with the recesses of the mind from which what is not yet said and what is not yet made comes. And I think it's important to everybody, because desire is infinitely more important than need.

Louis Kahn



Concept sketch for pool.

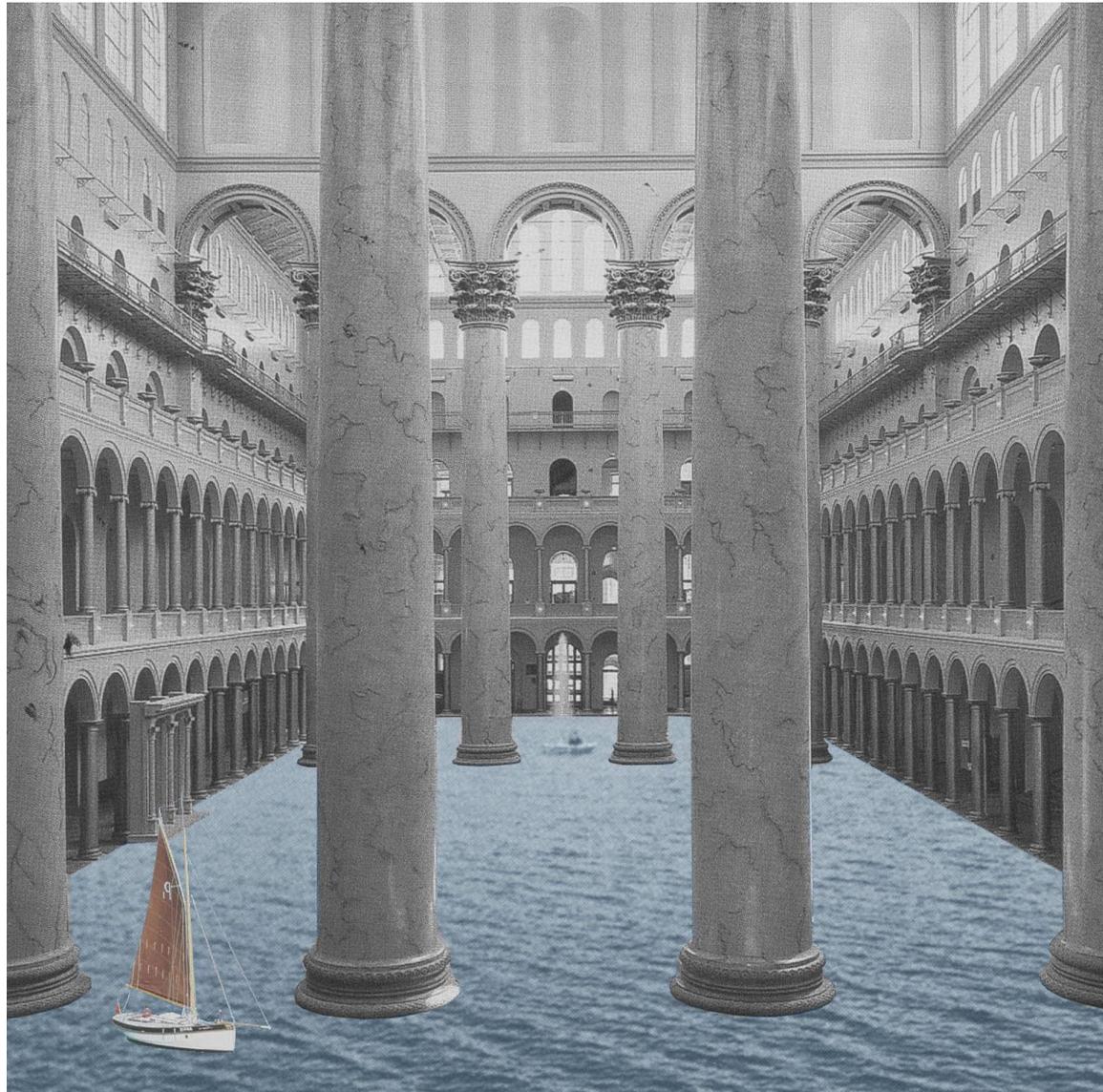


Photo-montage. National Building Museum. Washington D.C. "What if the floor were a pool of water?"



Study model of swimming pool with bridge.