



THE **SYNTHESIS** OF **PLACE**

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Approved:

**Mario Cortes, Chairman**

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**William Galloway**

May 12, 2000  
Blacksburg, Virginia

**Para mi Madre-Lupe, Abuelita-Mercedes, Hermana-Stephanie, los Vignoli's, Chico y el  
unico otro gringo mi Padre Jay Sr.**

1 abstract

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9 *modus operandi*

11 *site*

17 *path*

23 *wall*

29 *jewel*

37 *roof*

41 *view*

47 *place*

59 project

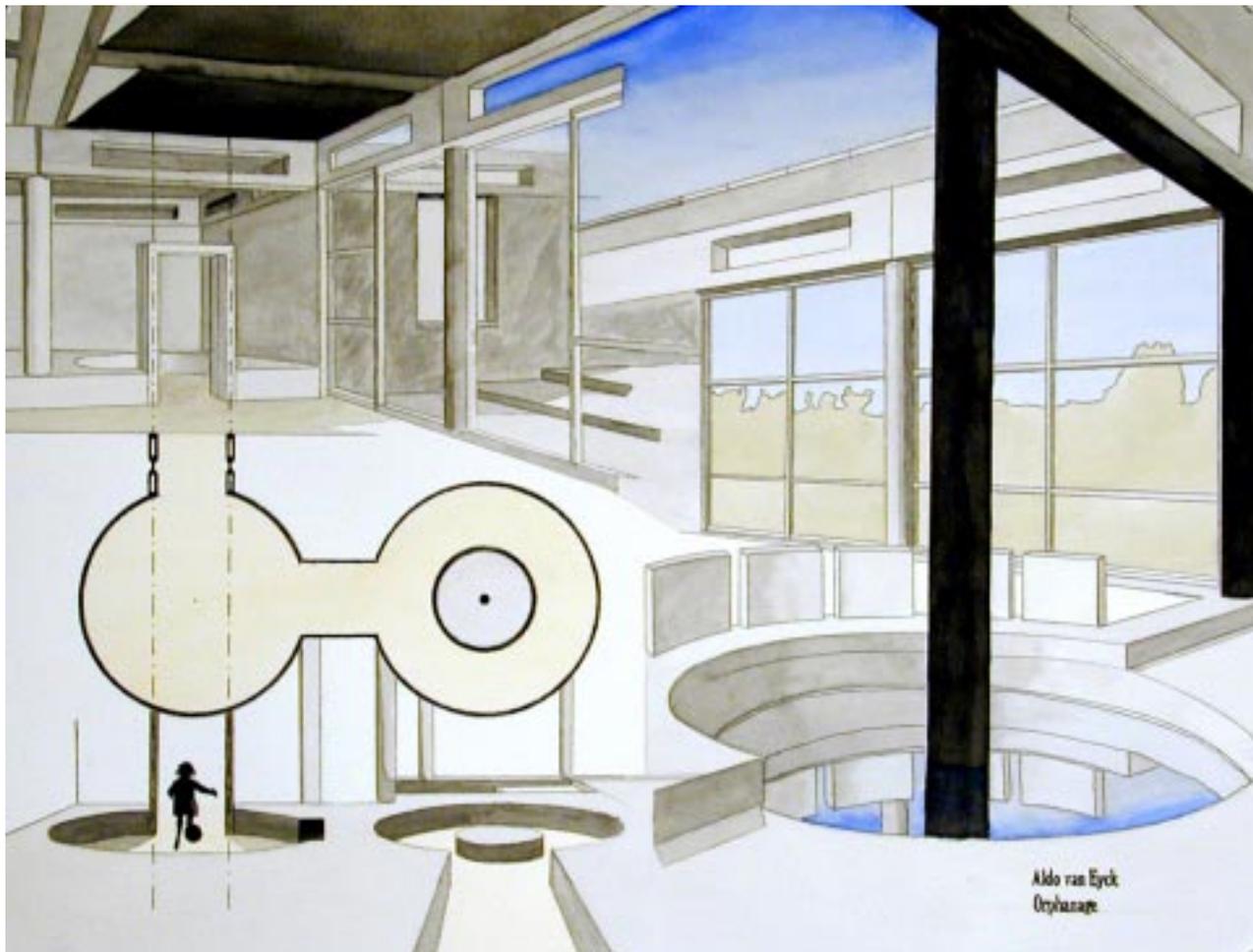
67 notes

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72 vita

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**This thesis is an investigation of place. The project is a vehicle which informs how the variables of site and program can be developed into place. Through the production of tangible work the architect may verify whether the creation of place is successful. The analysis of this outcome can enhance and reinforce the architect's position.**



Aldo van Eyck  
Orphanage

The architects position is to allow for alternatives. One can not predict behavior of people, so the complexity of the architecture should be able to accommodate the diverse nature of human experience.

Various works from Aldo van Eyck were analyzed as a precedent in which the creation of “place” is derived through polarities. A position about complementary or opposing aspects, with qualities such as open-closed, inside-outside, light-dark, unity-diversity is taken in order to give identity to space and matter.

*facing page: analytique  
Orphanage, Amstelveenseweg, 1955-60  
The analytique is a synthesis of specific  
places in an attempt to accentuate the  
relationship of inside and outside.*



Aldo van Eyck is generous when it comes to the concerns of humans and what they expect of their surroundings, both mentally and physically. These photographs show the range of how one or many can inhabit a place.



*from left to right:  
Play Ground Zaanhof, 1948 (1)  
Orphanage, 1955-60(1)  
Orphanage, 1955-60(1)  
Orphanage, 1955-60(1)  
Home for Single Parents, 1973-81(1)*





At the Hubertus House, Home for single Parents and their Children, Aldo van Eyck offers an abundance of visually linked spaces, creating an invariable selection of vantage points and arenas. This makes architecture desirable for whatever function it may serve.

*both pages:  
Home for Single Parents, 1973-81(1)*

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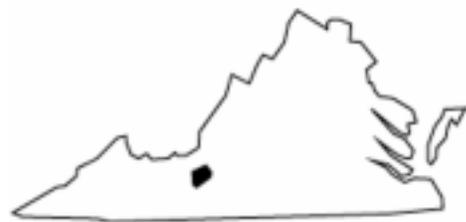
Project- Art Gallery

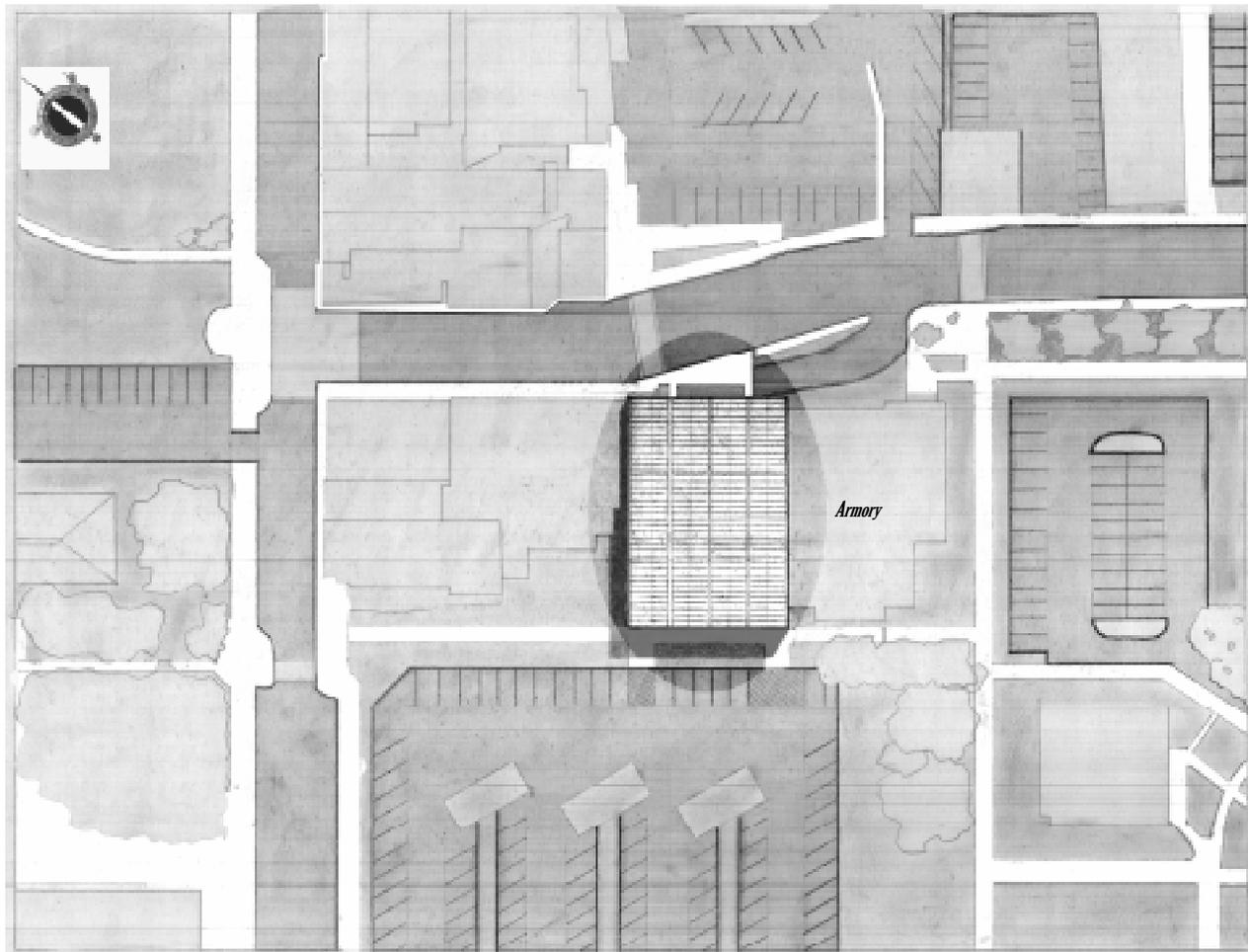
An art gallery is a place of inspiration. It is a place for the community that can evoke feelings, emotions and heighten creative awareness.

Site- Southwest Virginia,  
Blacksburg

Blacksburg needs a place which can accommodate variety in human interaction. The site must become an offering to the town. This offering must constantly collect and gather people so they may discover what the gallery offers. These offerings include the opportunity for group discussion and interaction as well as a personal atmosphere to facilitate moments of peace and reflection.

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50'



The project is an addition to the Virginia Tech school of Art. This addition is an art gallery for students and visiting artists. The neighboring gallery in the Armory building can be renovated to contain the supporting functions for the new addition.

The site for the new gallery is currently a parking lot for the public. The site is also used by pedestrians as a path connecting downtown Blacksburg to Virginia Tech.

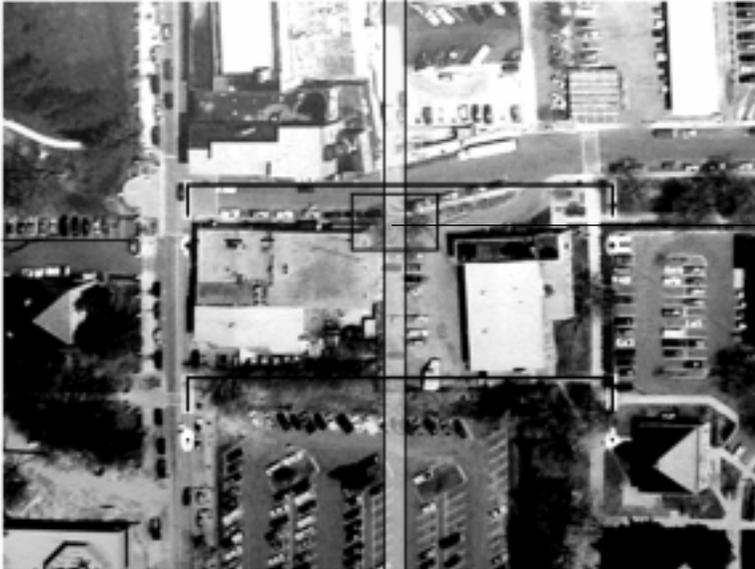




*photograph of site- draper st.*



*photograph of draper*



*aerial photograph of site and surrounding buildings*

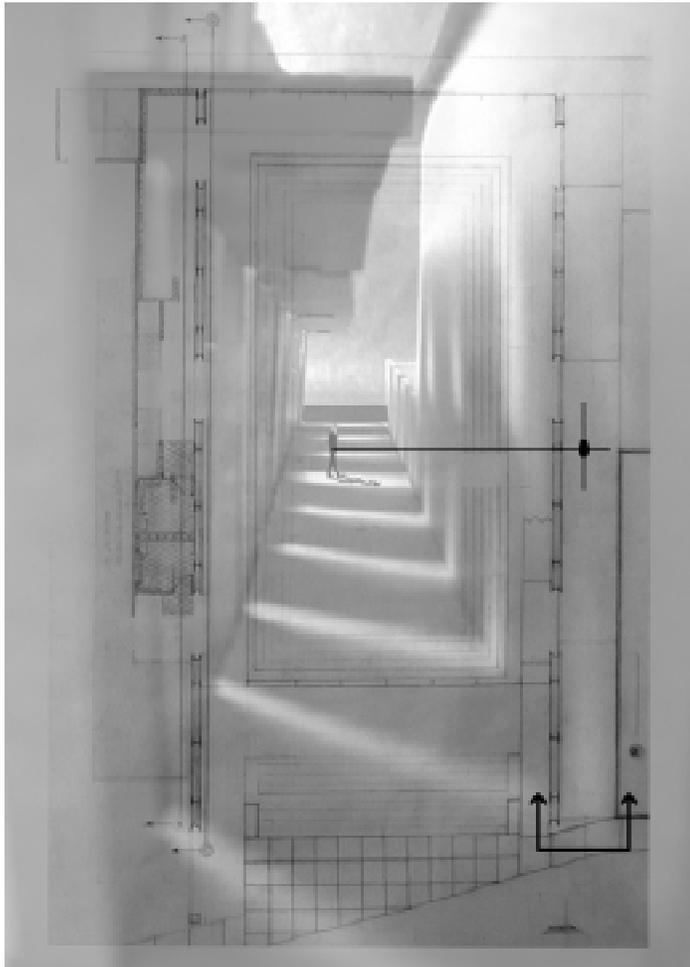


*photograph of south west view from site*

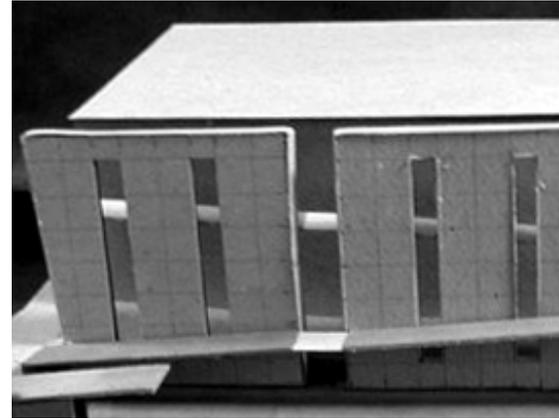


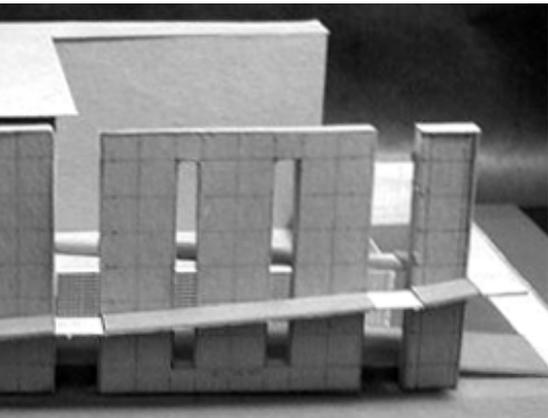
*existing portion of path entering site*

In order for the gallery to attract the public to the site, it must continue to act as a connection between town and campus. The initial thought about a way to bring people into contact with the building was to bring the path directly into the gallery. This strategy would force people to enter the building to continue through the site. This approach does not make for good place, for it leaves one no alternatives. The proposition is to keep and enhance the small section of the pedestrian path where it crosses the site. The individual makes the decision to go in the gallery and through site or remain outside and pass by.



*overlay of graphite on vellum (plan) with digital photograph of model*





*early sketch model*

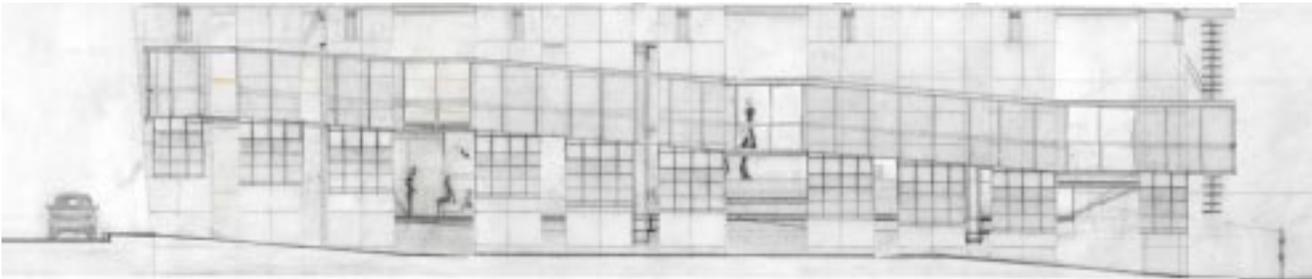


*early sketch models studying path and light on site*



*early sketch model*

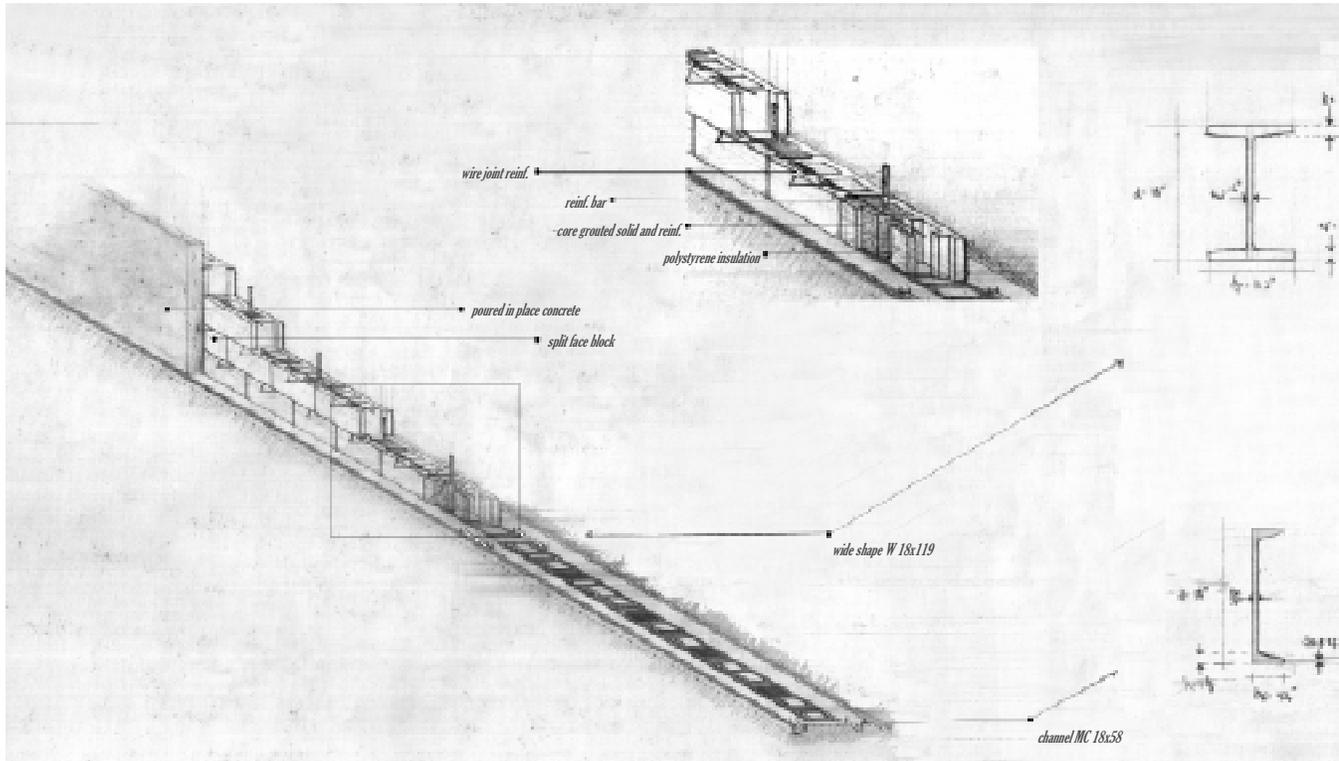




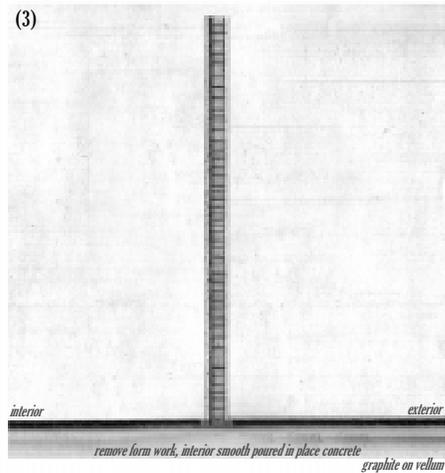
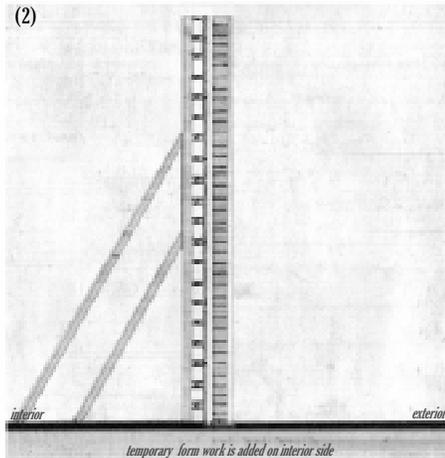
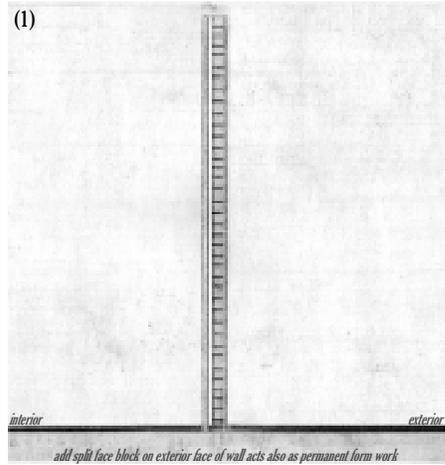
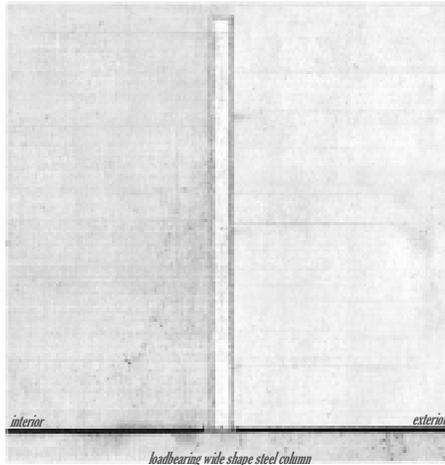
*early section, graphite on vellum*

The exterior path runs along the wall on the Northwest side of the site. The passageway remains covered from the elements but not enclosed or conditioned.

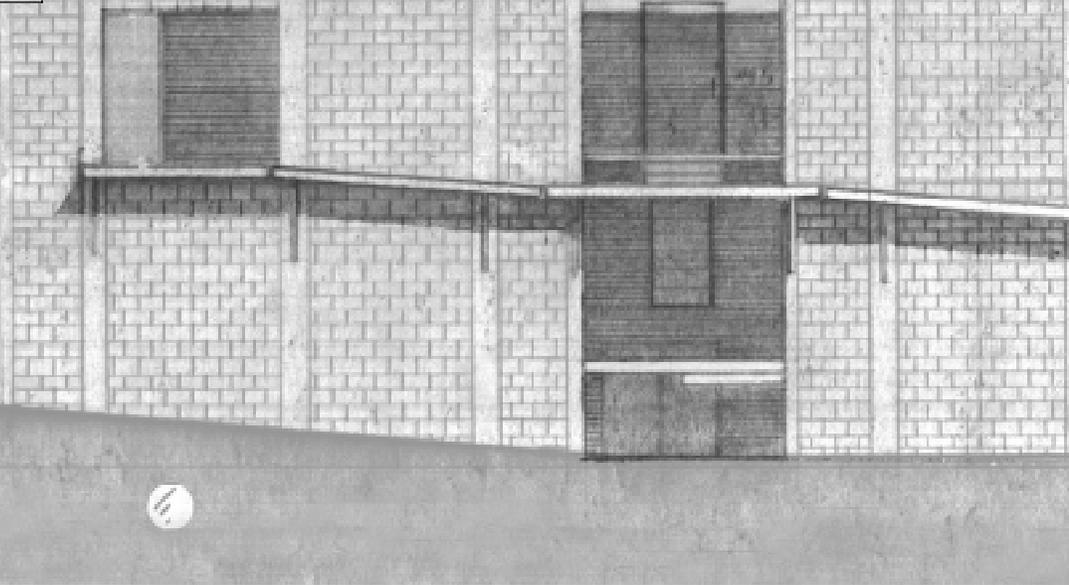
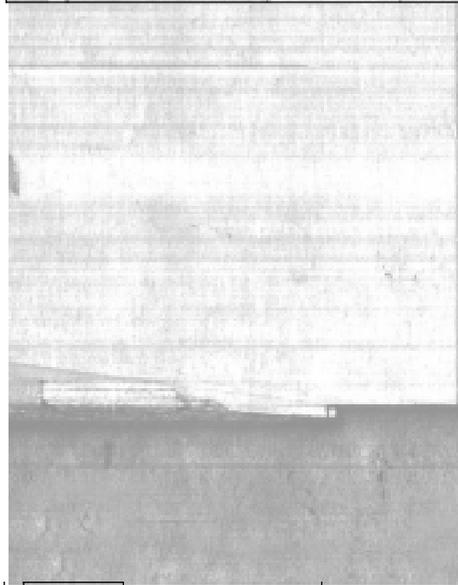
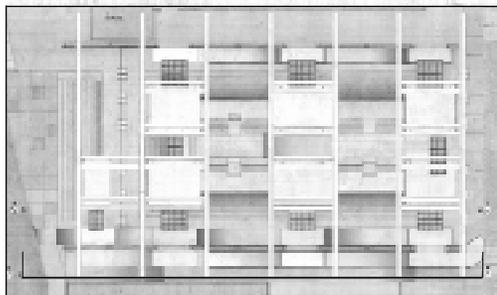
The gallery invites those who choose to pass on the exterior by making subtractions in the wall allowing a prolonged glimpse into the interior. The wall begins to be a strong factor in the urban context, stretching over 100 feet. From the interior ones perception is to see the building as enclosure, understanding its volumetric qualities like a room. On the other hand one may let their eyes wonder through the openings to read a bit of the urban fabric. With these large pieces of visual information the person can formulate a complete image of their immediate surroundings. It allows one to truly see the debris or residue that makes a living, growing urban world.

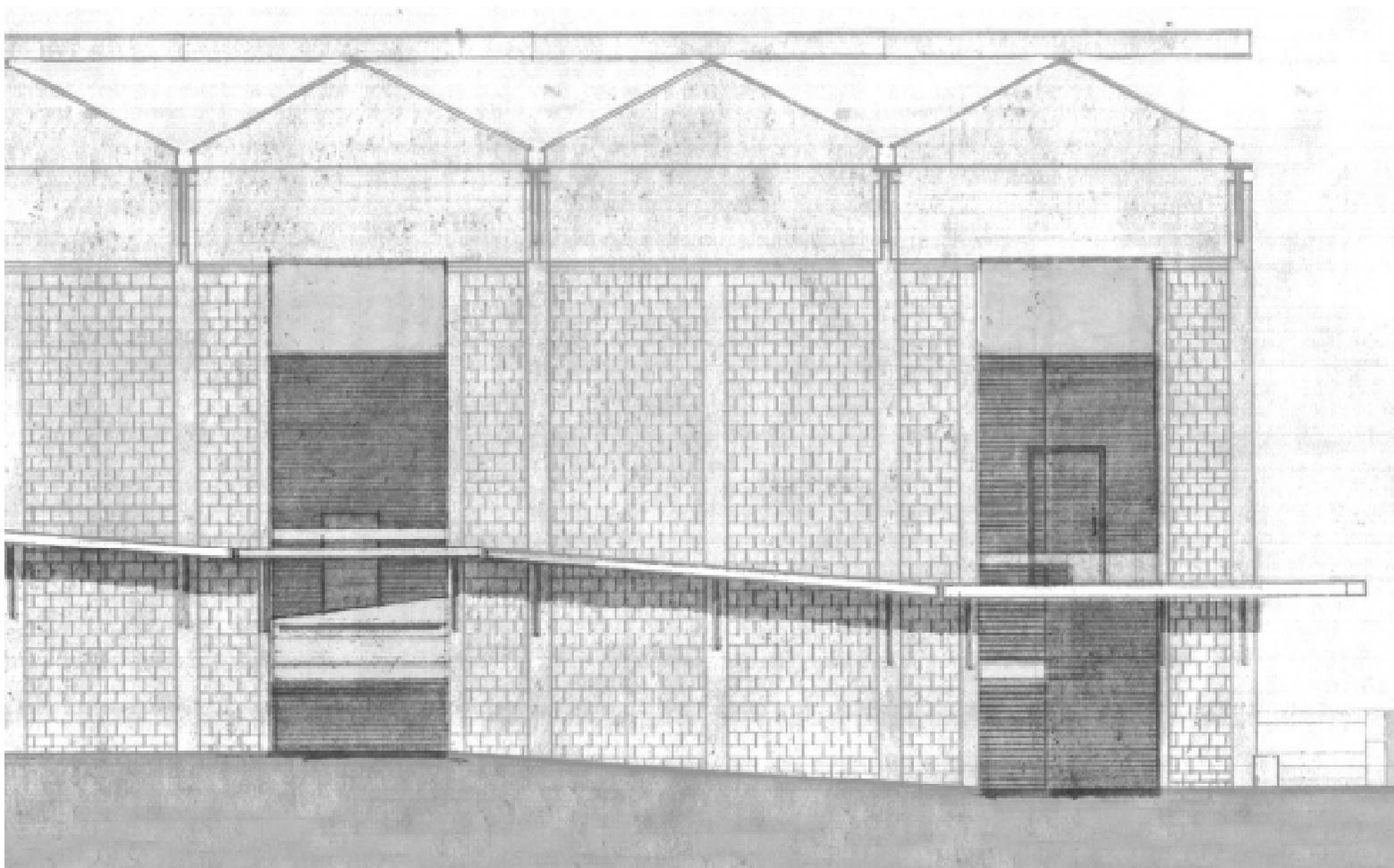


graphite on vellum

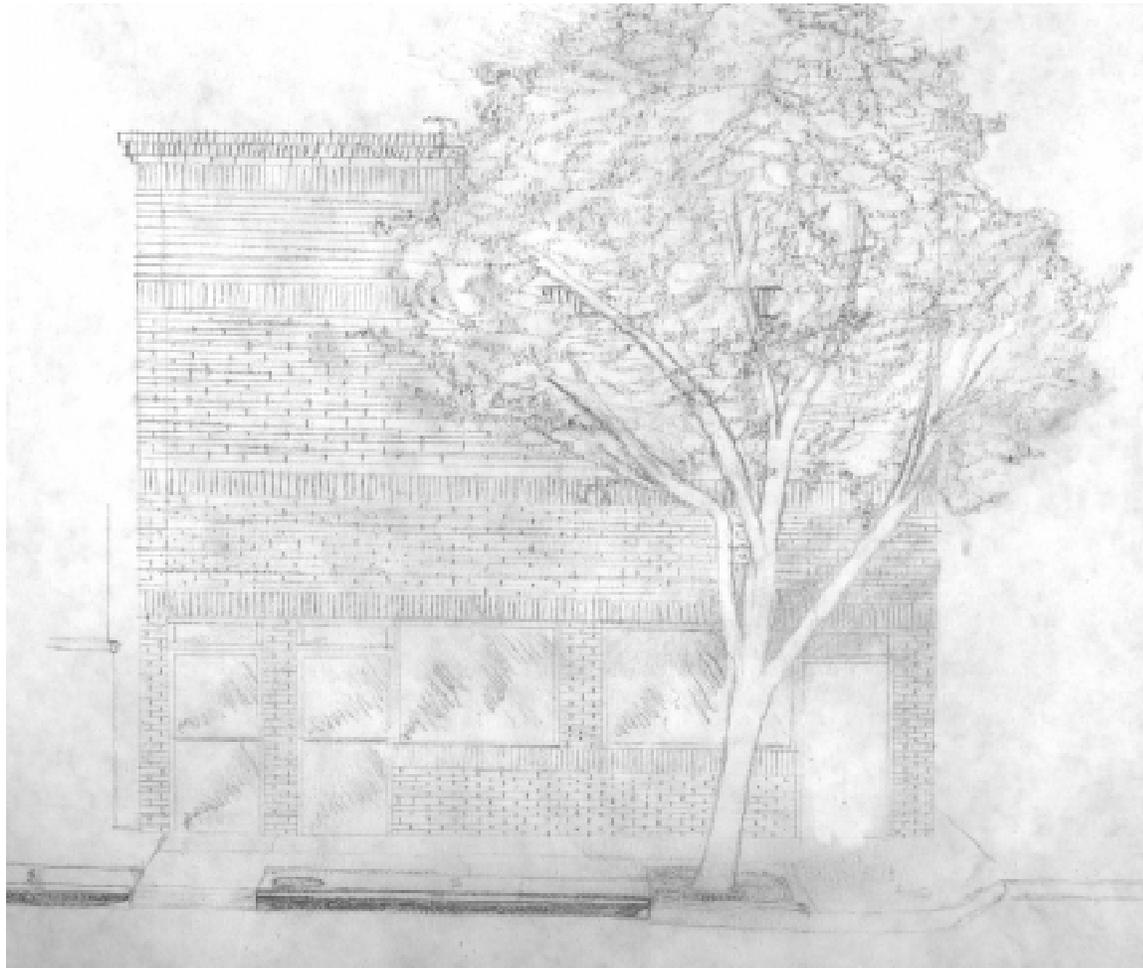


The wall started as a solid concrete element, but developed into a three piece system for its construction. First a non-loadbearing block wall is constructed. This block veneer is built up between the steel loadbearing columns that hold up the roof and suspended floors. The block portion of the wall is on the exterior, facing the neighboring buildings. The split faced block better defines the place of exterior which is rougher and less protected from the elements. The interior portion of the wall is poured in place concrete with a smooth finish to fit the galleries controlled conditioned space. Three piece system (1) A non-loadbearing block wall that acts as permanent form work and first layer of defense from exterior conditions. One individual block is 16" long, 8" tall, and 12" deep containing polystyrene foam insulation and air gap. Wire joint reinforcing ties engage the site cast concrete on the interior. (2) Temporary stud wall and panels are built up on the interior portion of the wall. (3) Concrete is poured between the split face block and the form-work. Next, the temporary form-work is removed.







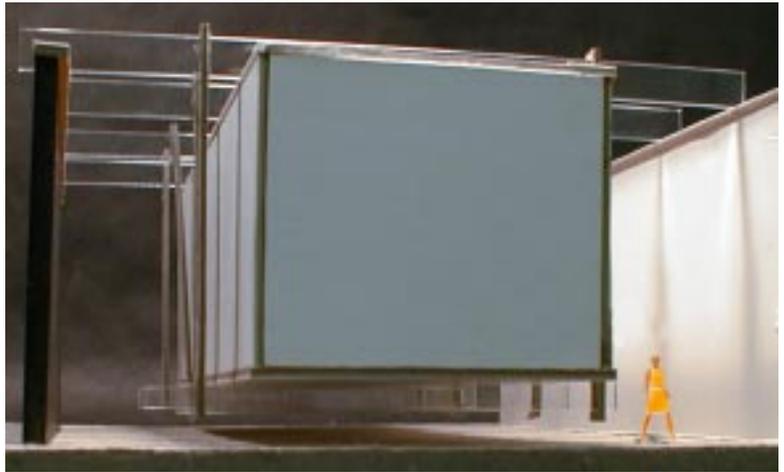


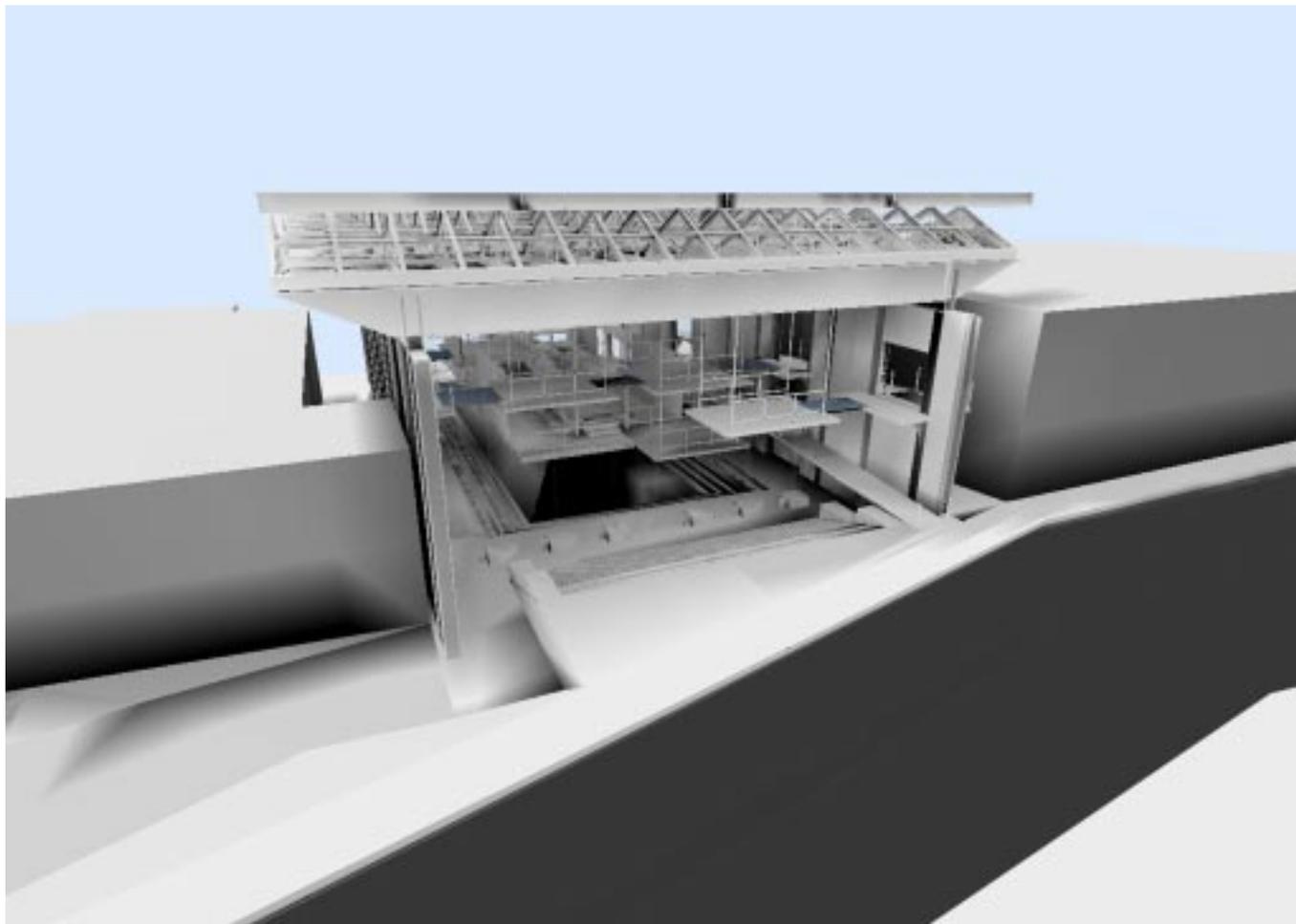
The existing galleries in downtown Blacksburg have no mark indicating the significance of what special objects are inside. Only those who pursue art know that there is an art gallery in Blacksburg.

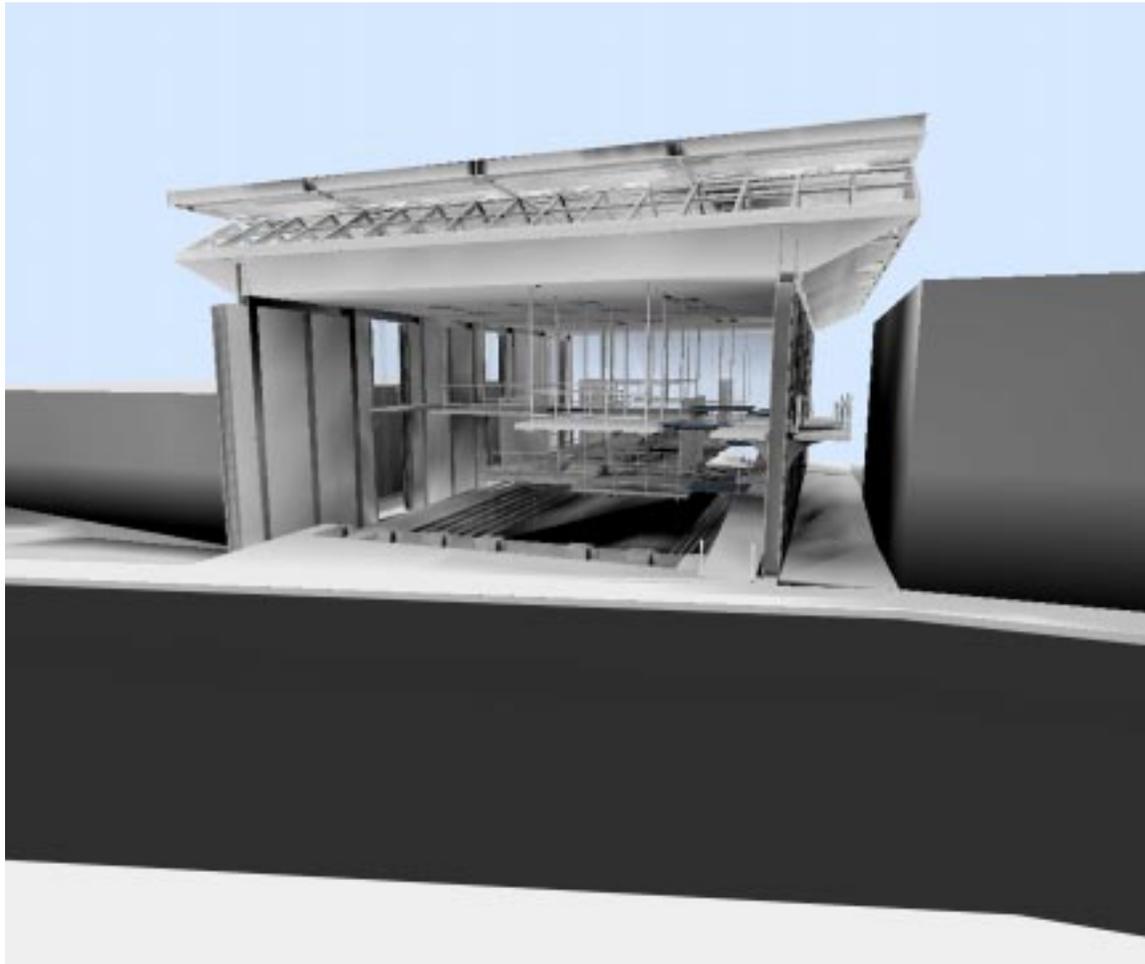
The new gallery is an offering to the town that stands on its own. It attracts people so they may have the opportunity to discover the art it contains.

The gallery must contrast its surroundings in order to entice, gather, and collect people. The gallery stands contrary to the forms in its urban context. It is a jewel set delicately in its place.





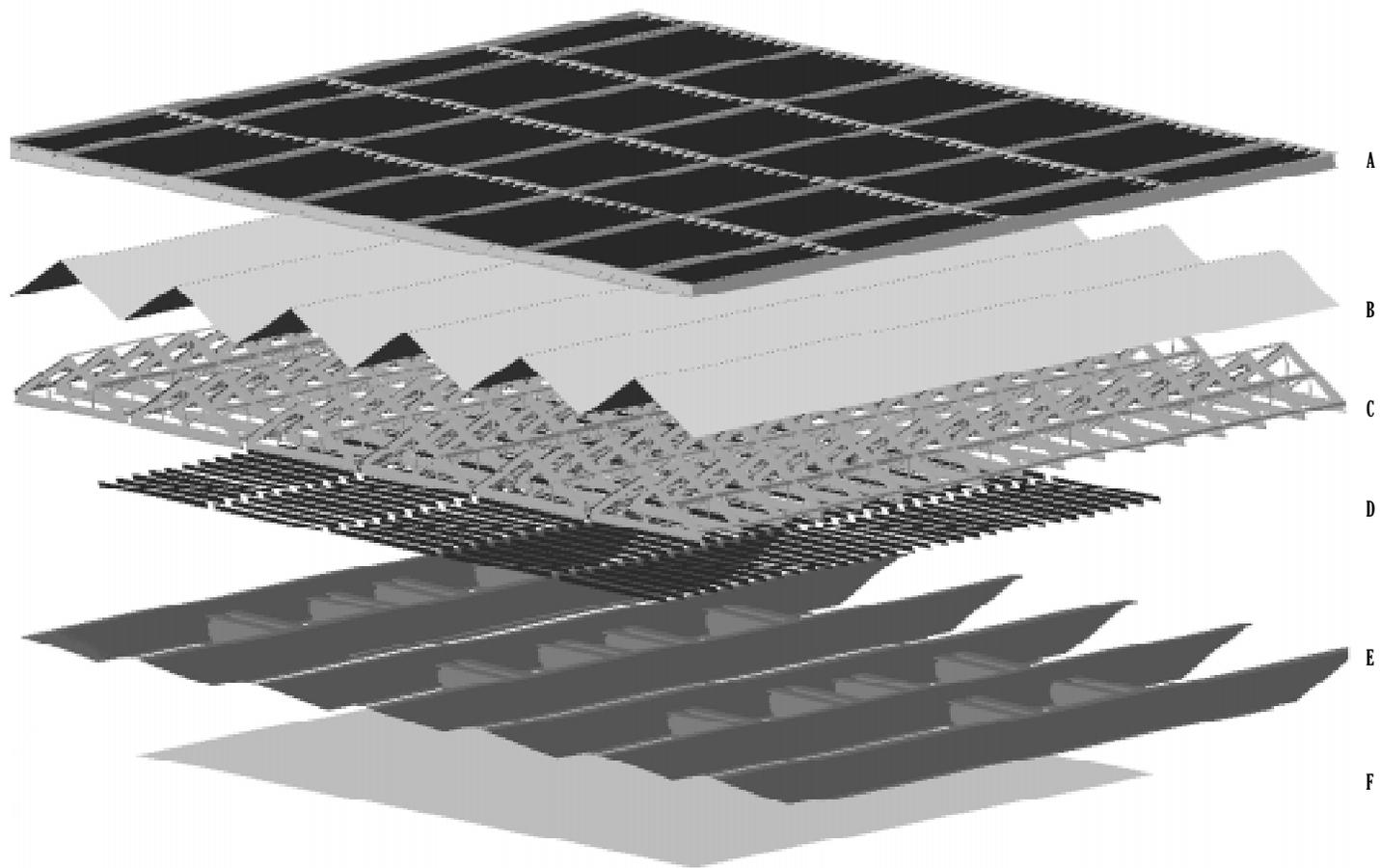




When there is a sole object in contradiction to its surroundings, the eye cannot help but to be attracted to it. Unlike the solid, massive forms that surround it, the gallery structure is suspended and transparent.







*Fixed steel louvers, diffuse light*

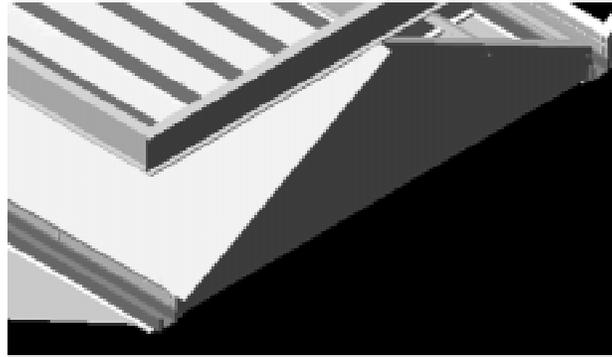
*tempered glass panels, double glazing low emissivity*

*gable trusses span between girders*

*adjustable aluminum louvers, controls light intensity housing for artificial lighting*

*girders, carry roof and suspended floors*

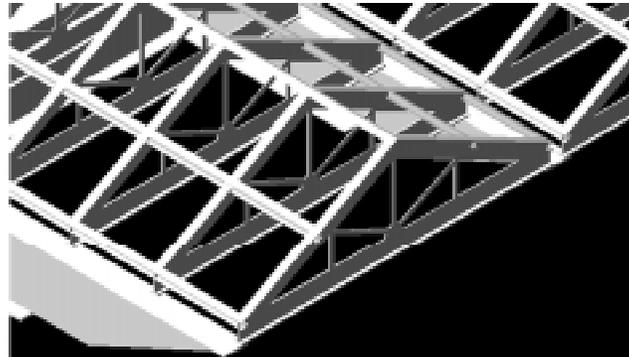
*ceiling, tightly stretched white fabric, diffuse light*



A and B

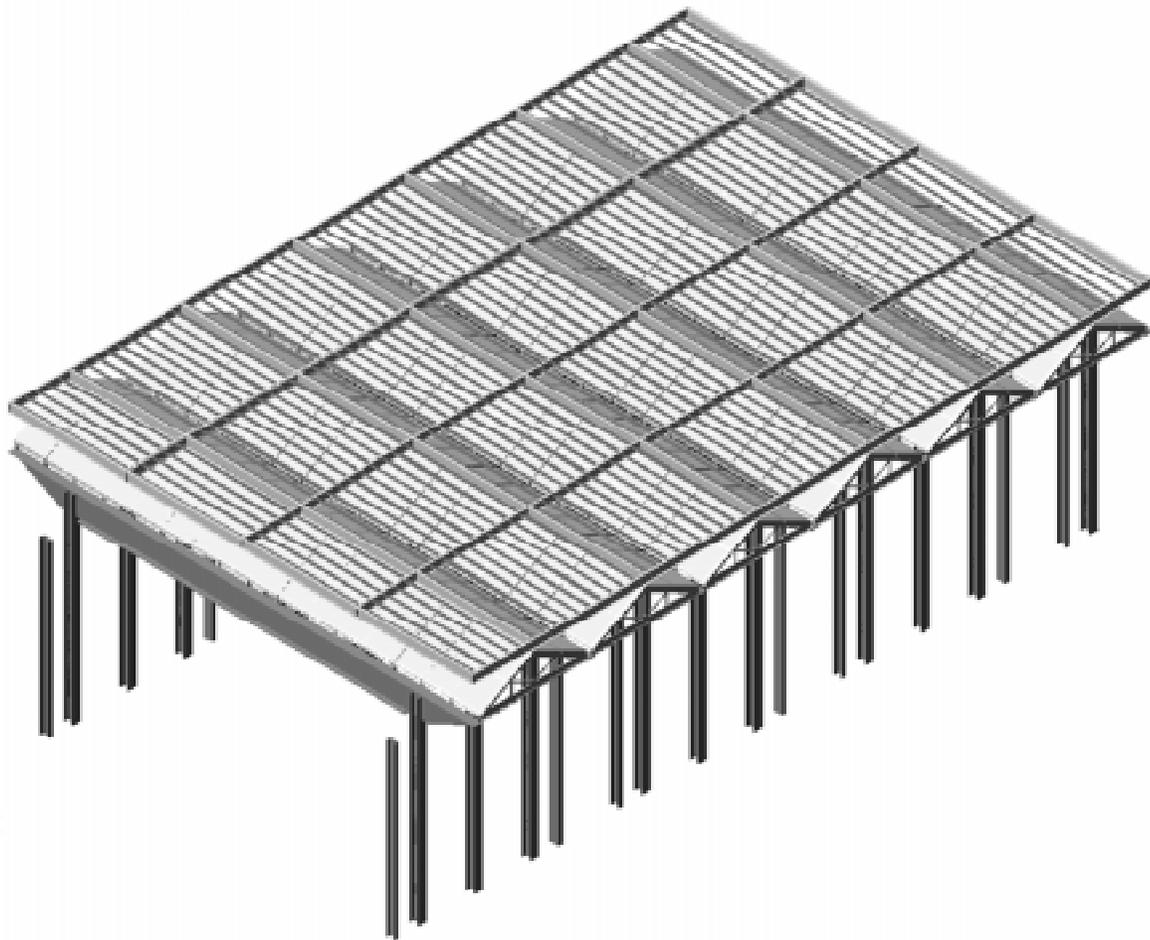
*shaded autocad drawing*

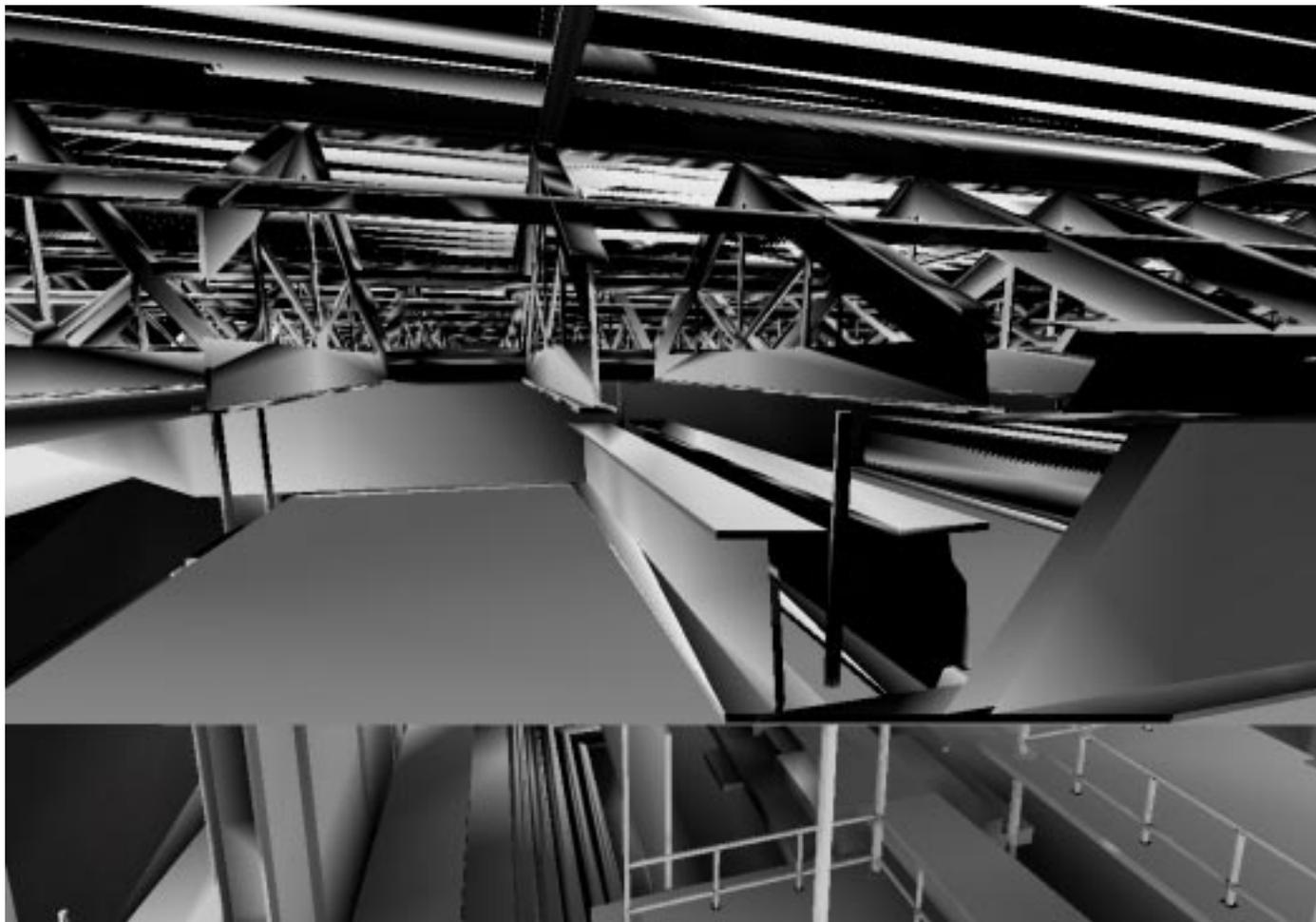
The roof is constructed into different layers which all work to diffuse natural light. To ensure the preservation of the works of art it is important to control the amount of light and its intensity. The first layer is a set of steel fixed louvers that allow for morning light to penetrate to the next layer. These louvers are fixed in a position as to deflect afternoon and evening light. The next layer is paneled glass that rests on small gabled trusses allowing for light to pass while directing any falling water into gutters on either side of the gables. As the light continues past the glass it reaches a second pair of adjustable aluminum louvers. The light that makes it through these louvers is evenly dispersed throughout the gallery by a translucent fabric stretched across the upper portion of the gallery. The fabric becomes the ceiling for the gallery, concealing all mechanics, cables and duct work above it while evenly dispersing natural and artificial light throughout the building.



C and E

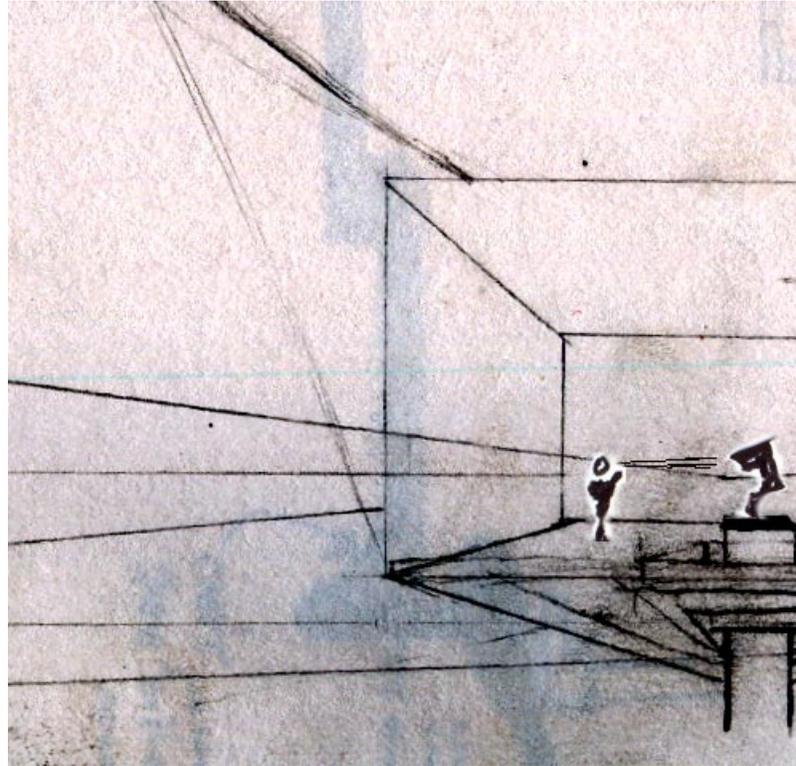
*shaded autocad drawing*

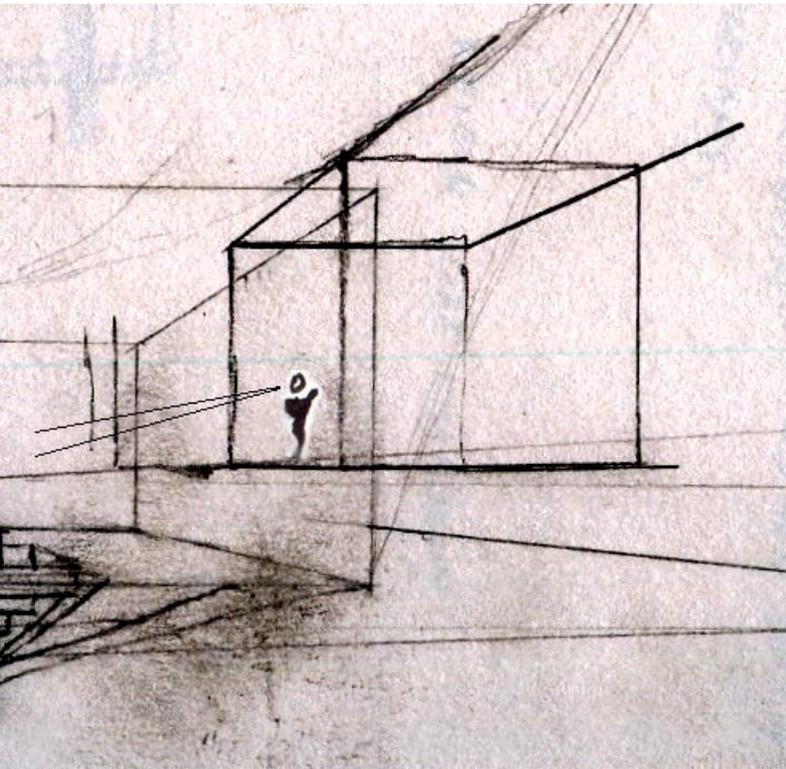




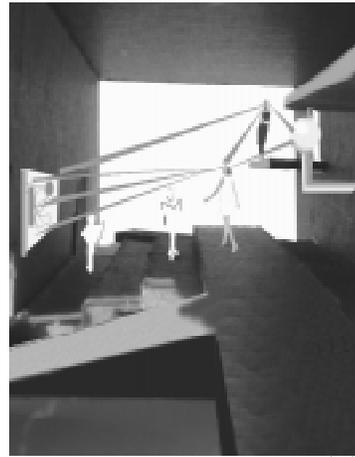
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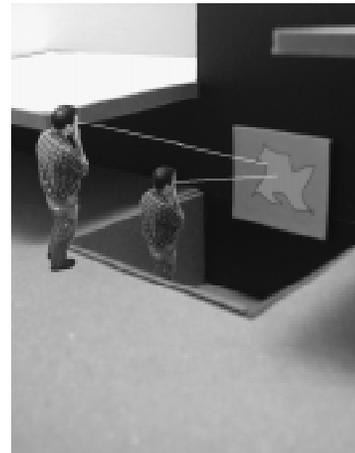


*conceptual sketch*



*conceptual model*

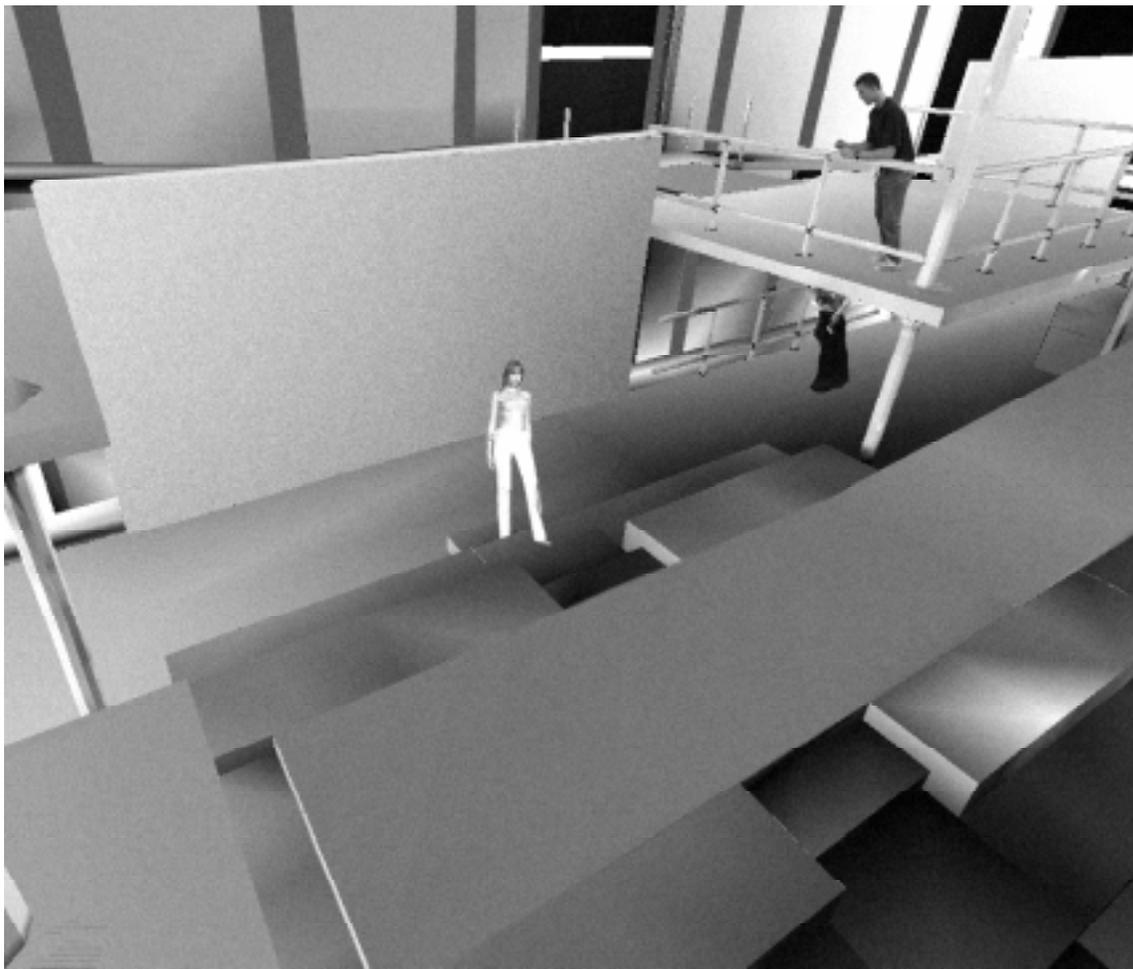
To view two dimensional and three dimensional objects one must have the chance to adjust his or her own position. The adjustment of ones position can be accomplished by level change and change in distance about the work. Change in level and positions gives the viewer new angles and a new relationship to what they view. Due to an abundance of level changes, one can clearly see objects throughout the gallery at various distances no matter how many people are occupying the gallery.



*conceptual model*

*facing page far left images:  
Castelvecchio museum, 1958-64 (2)*

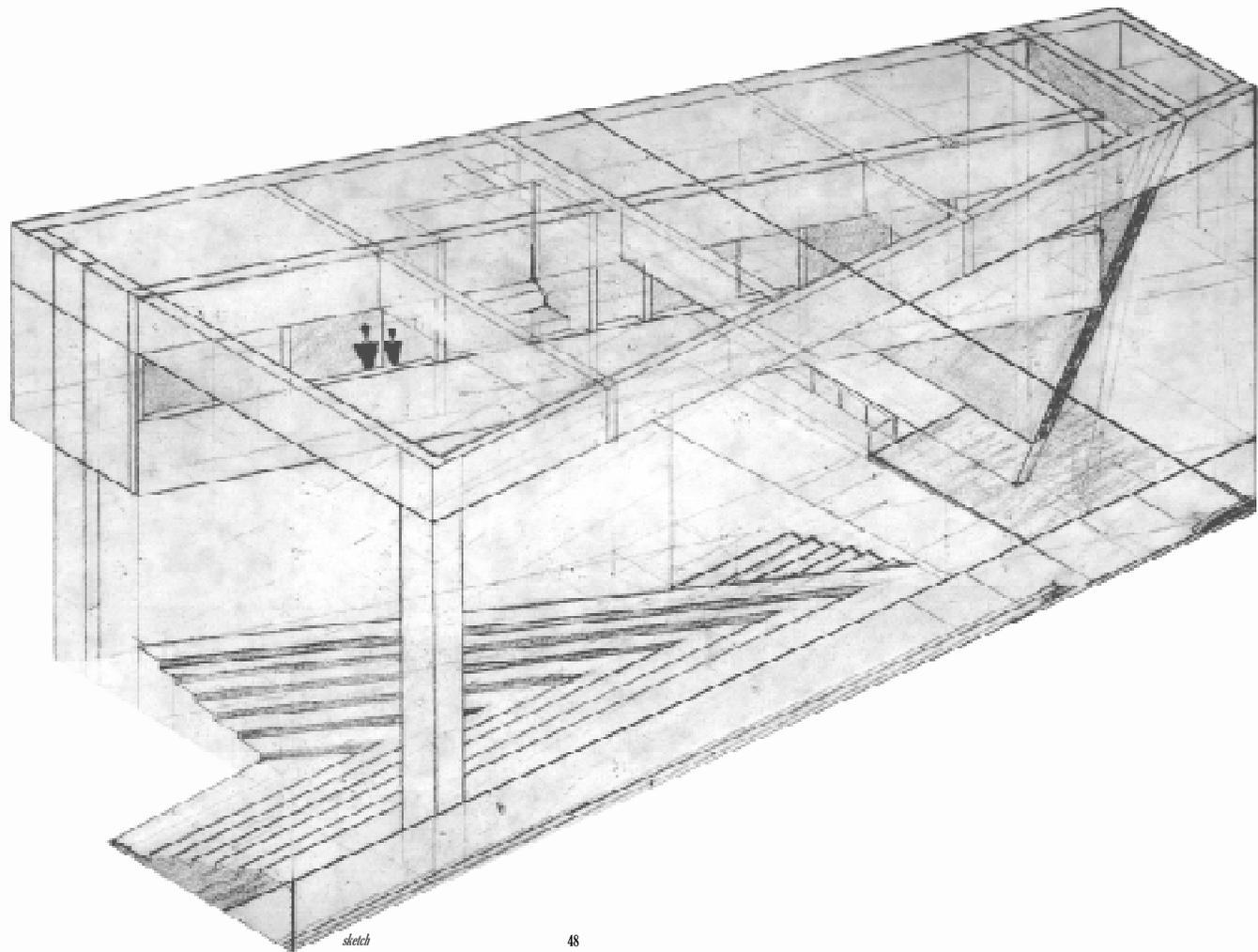




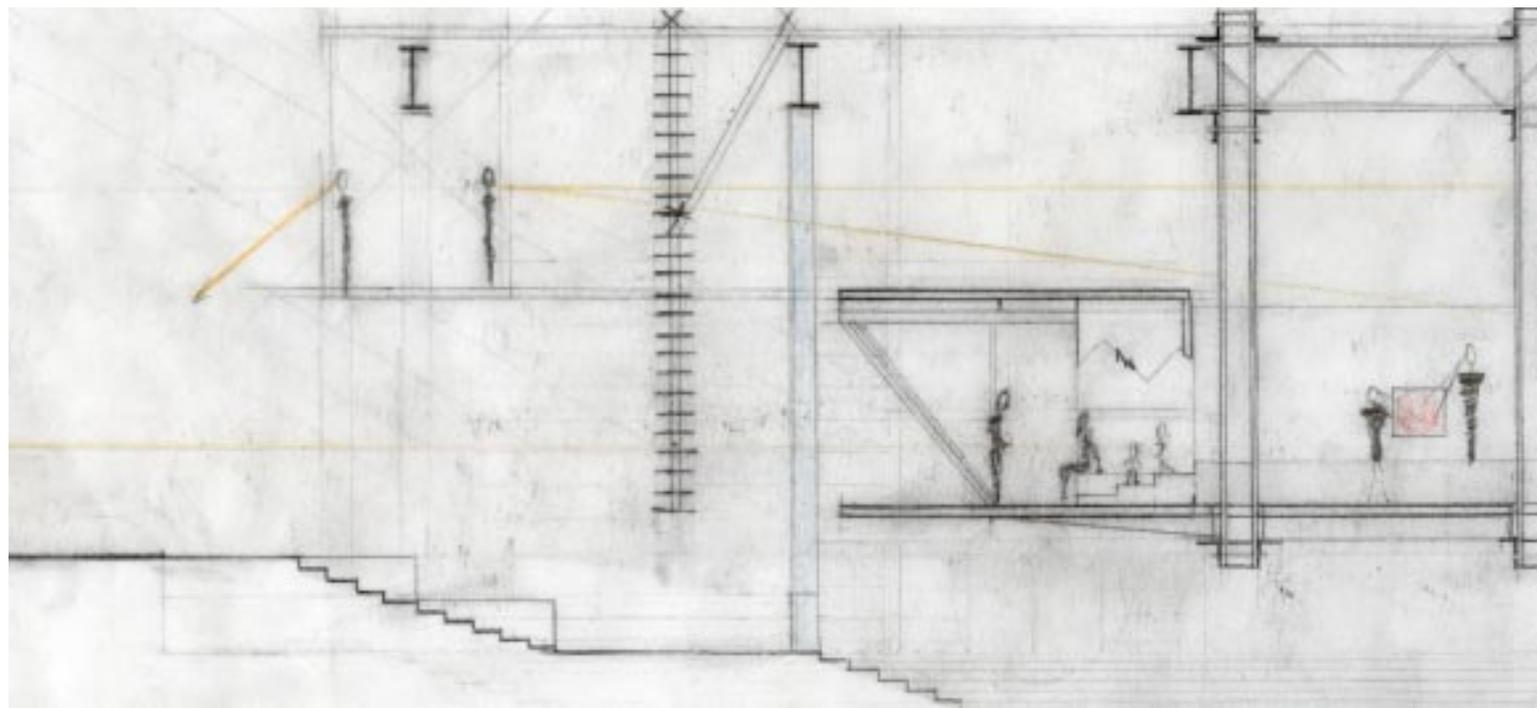
Art is not the only thing on display. People as well as the building are part of the arena. If one is to correctly view the building as an object, the architect must make it possible for all to have an equal opportunity to explore.

The gallery or jewel must be fully viewed to arrive at a better understanding of its 3-D forms, conditions, spaces, and enclosure.

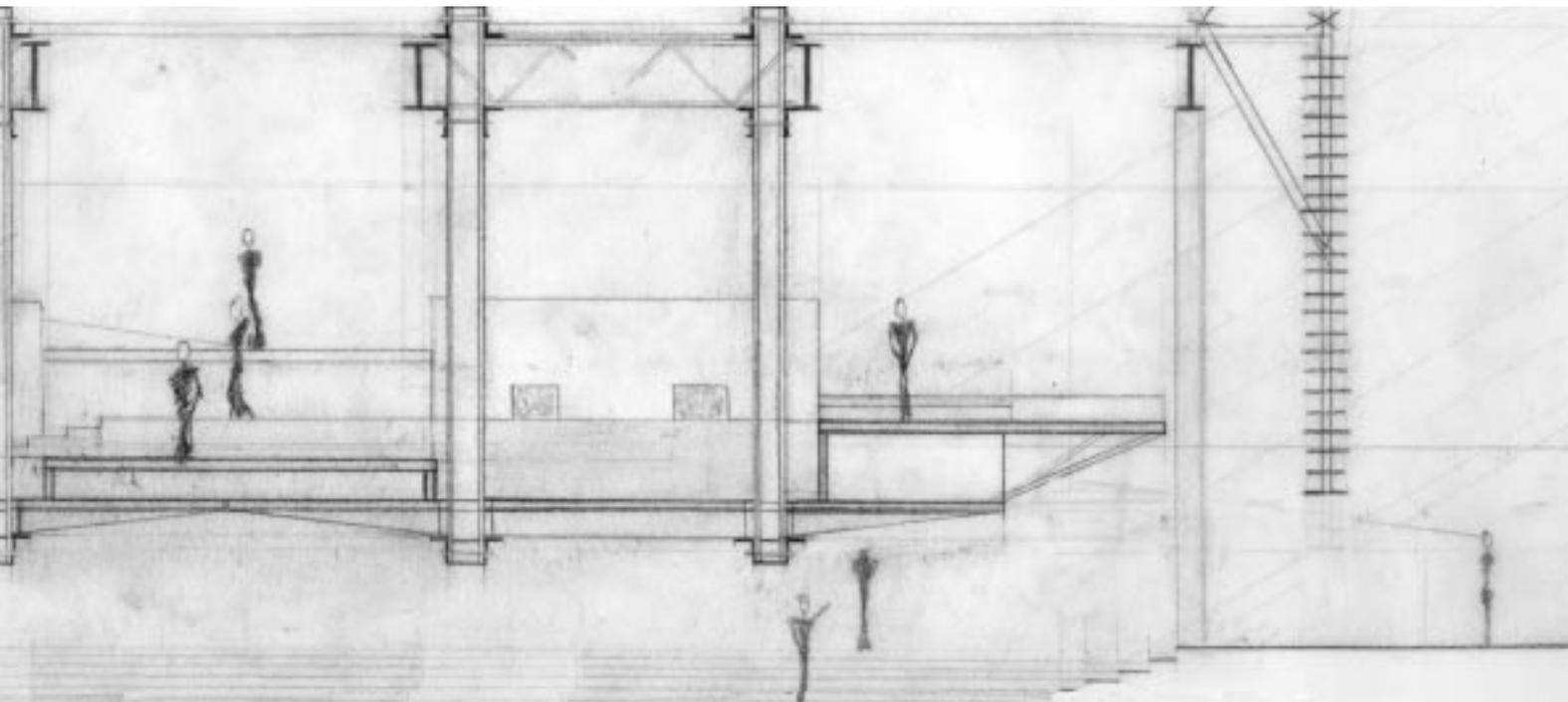
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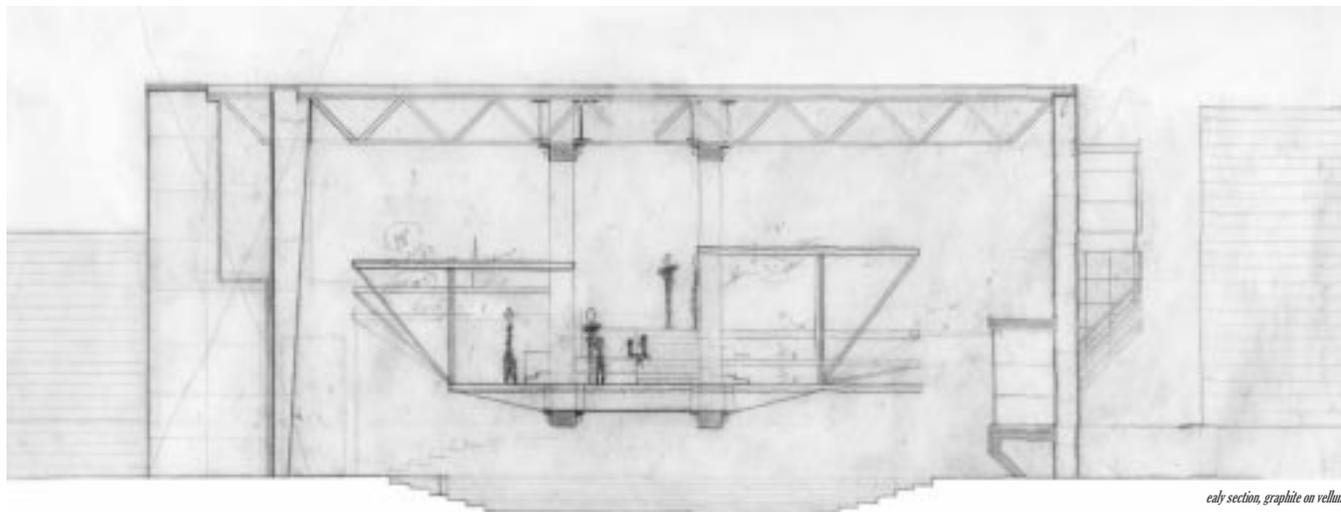


*sketch*

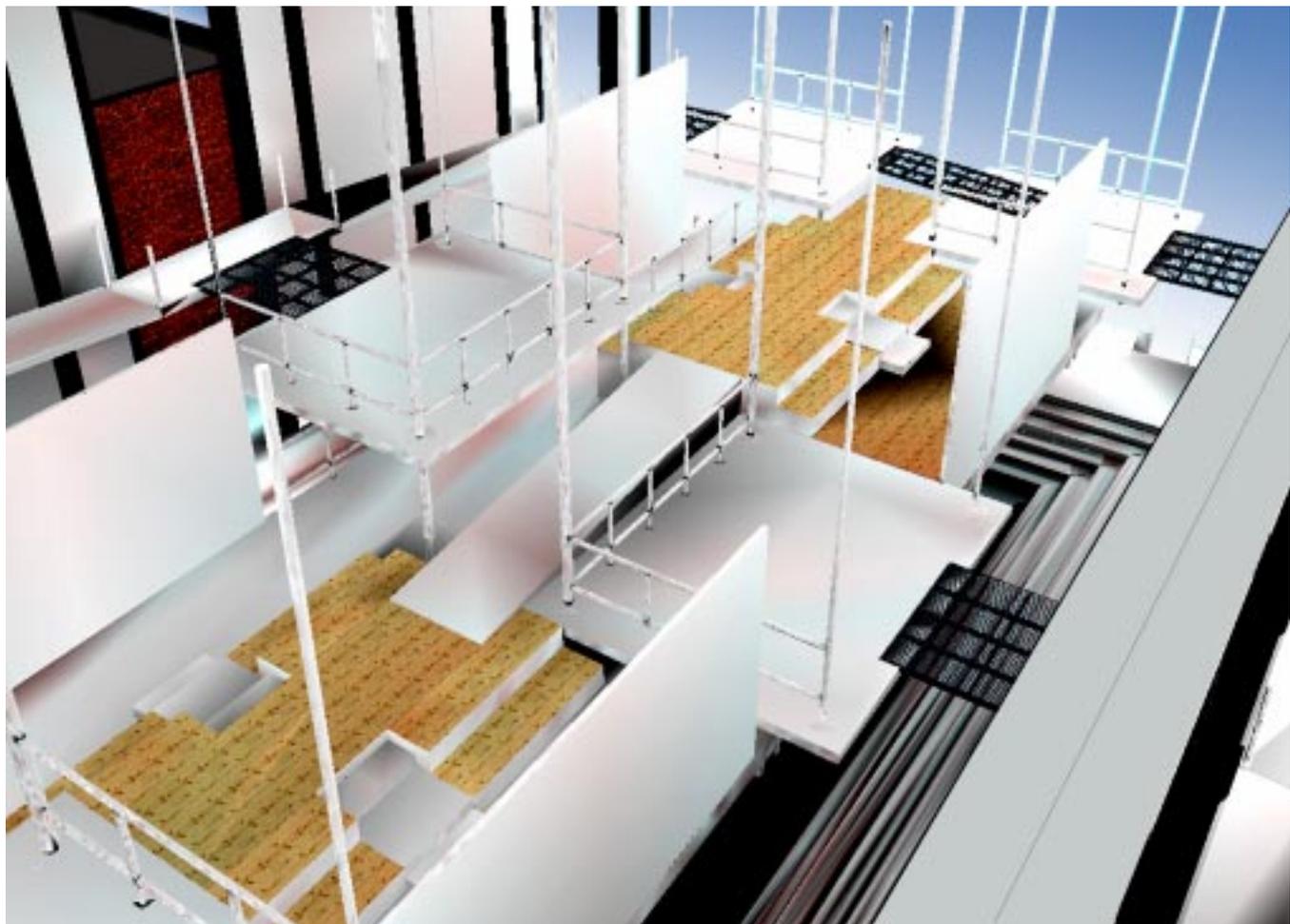


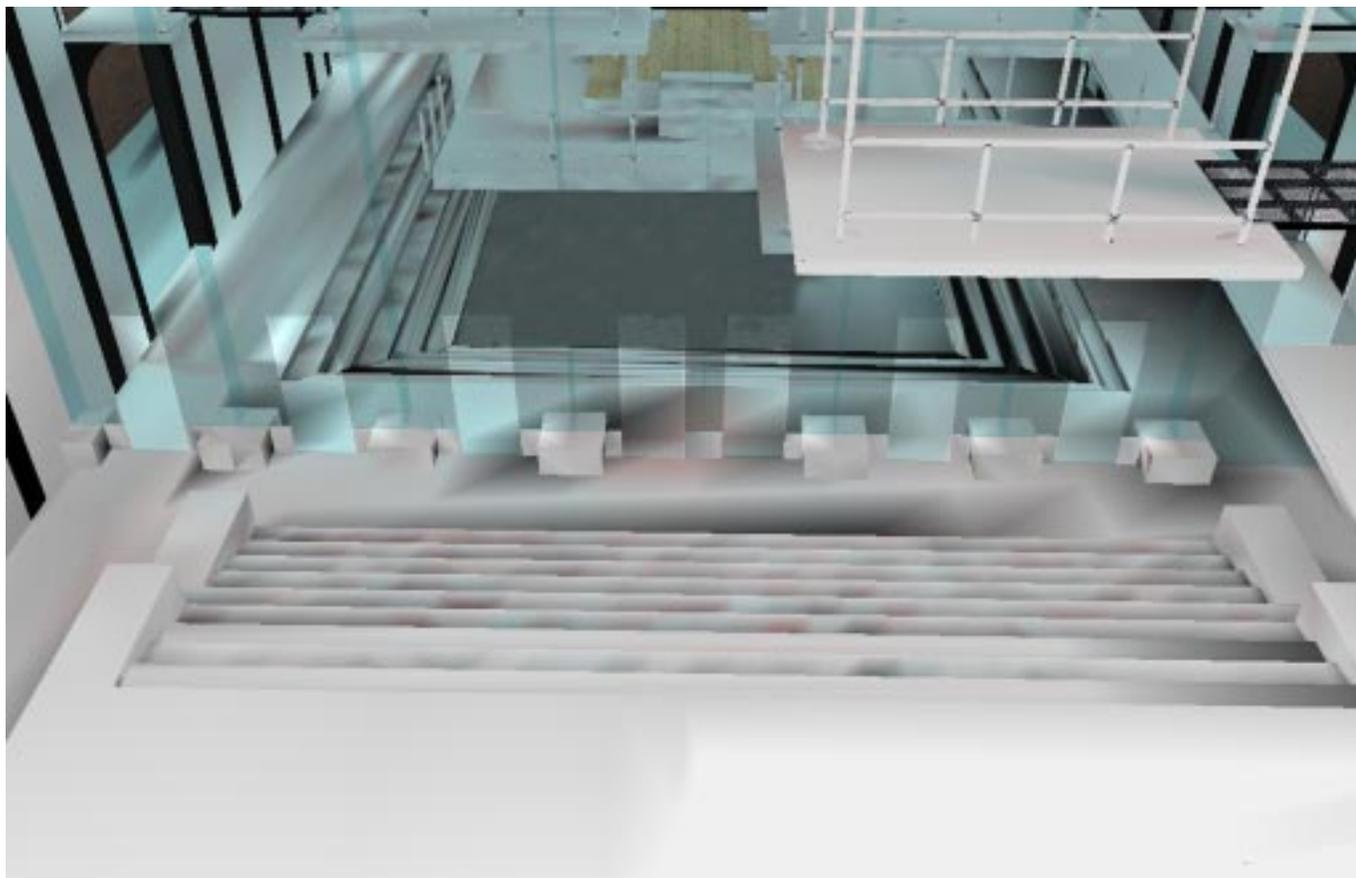
10'

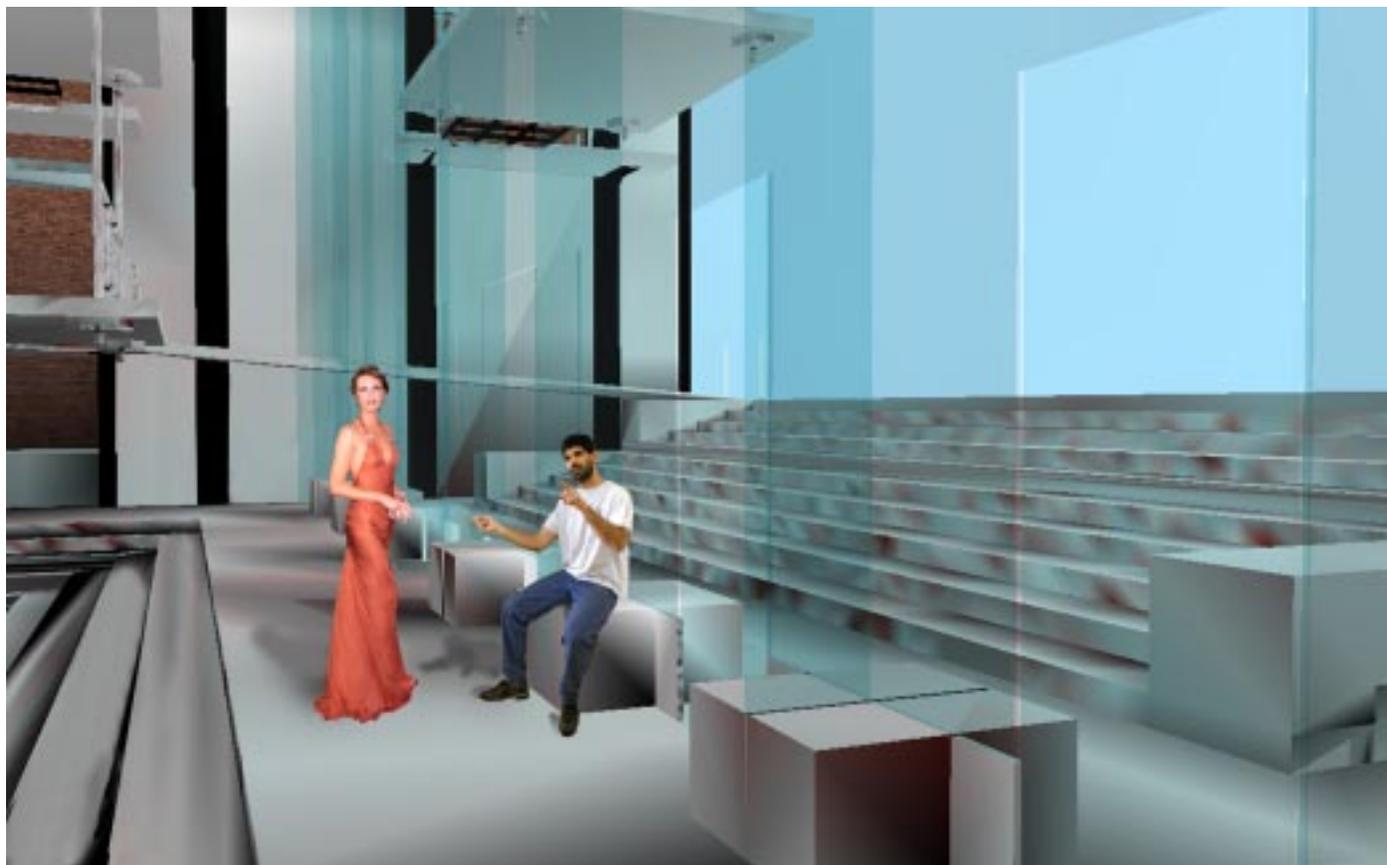




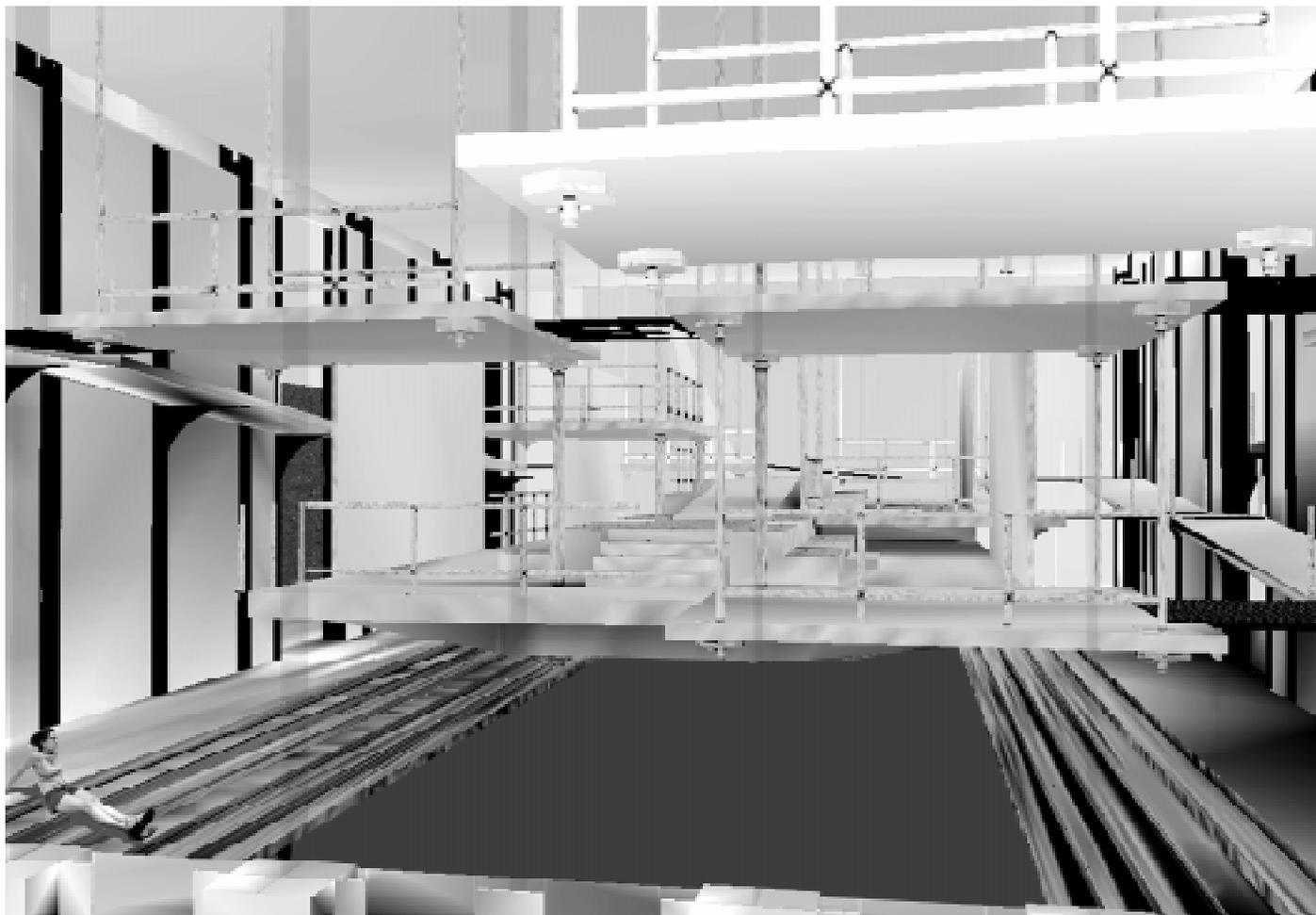
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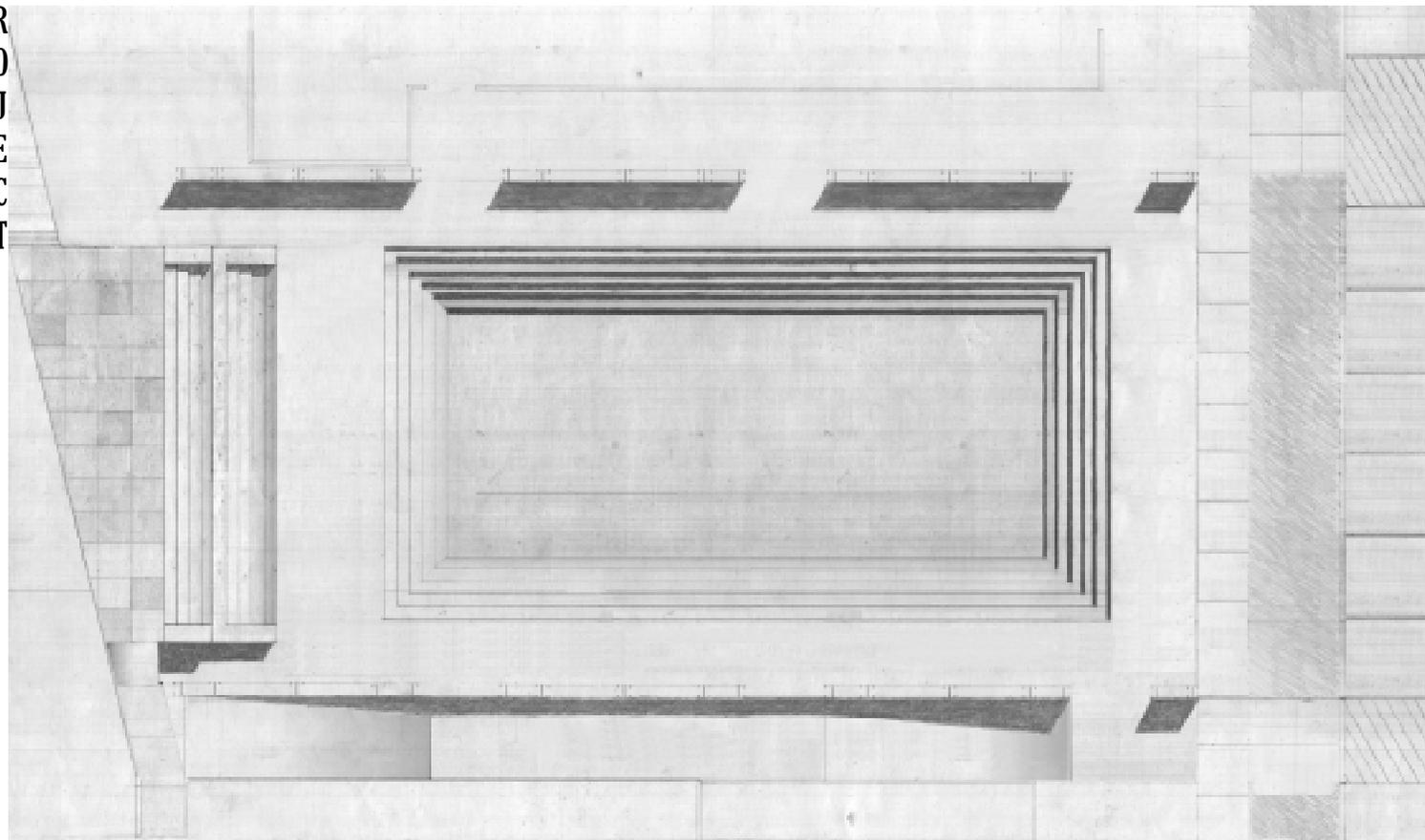
*computer rendering*



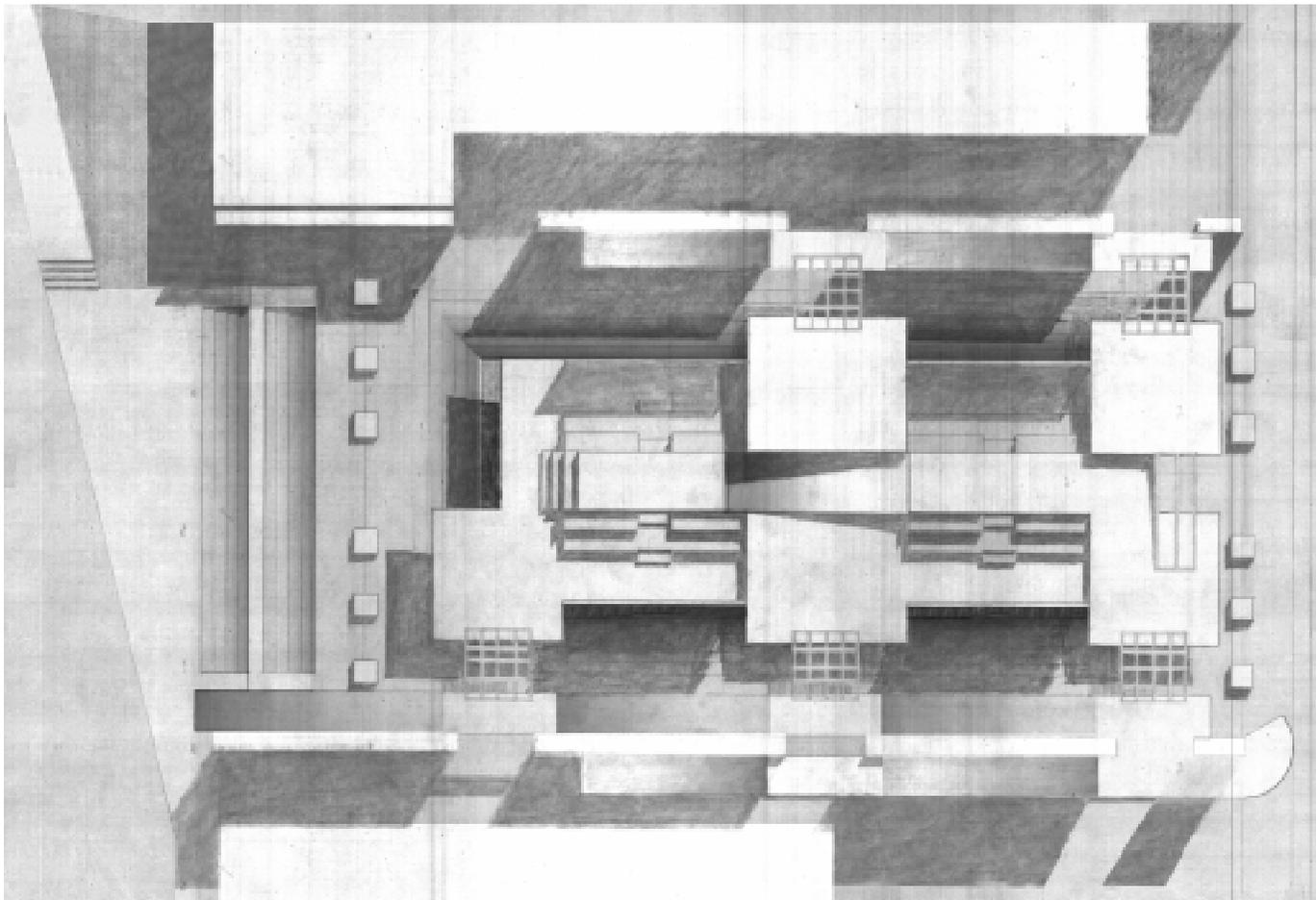




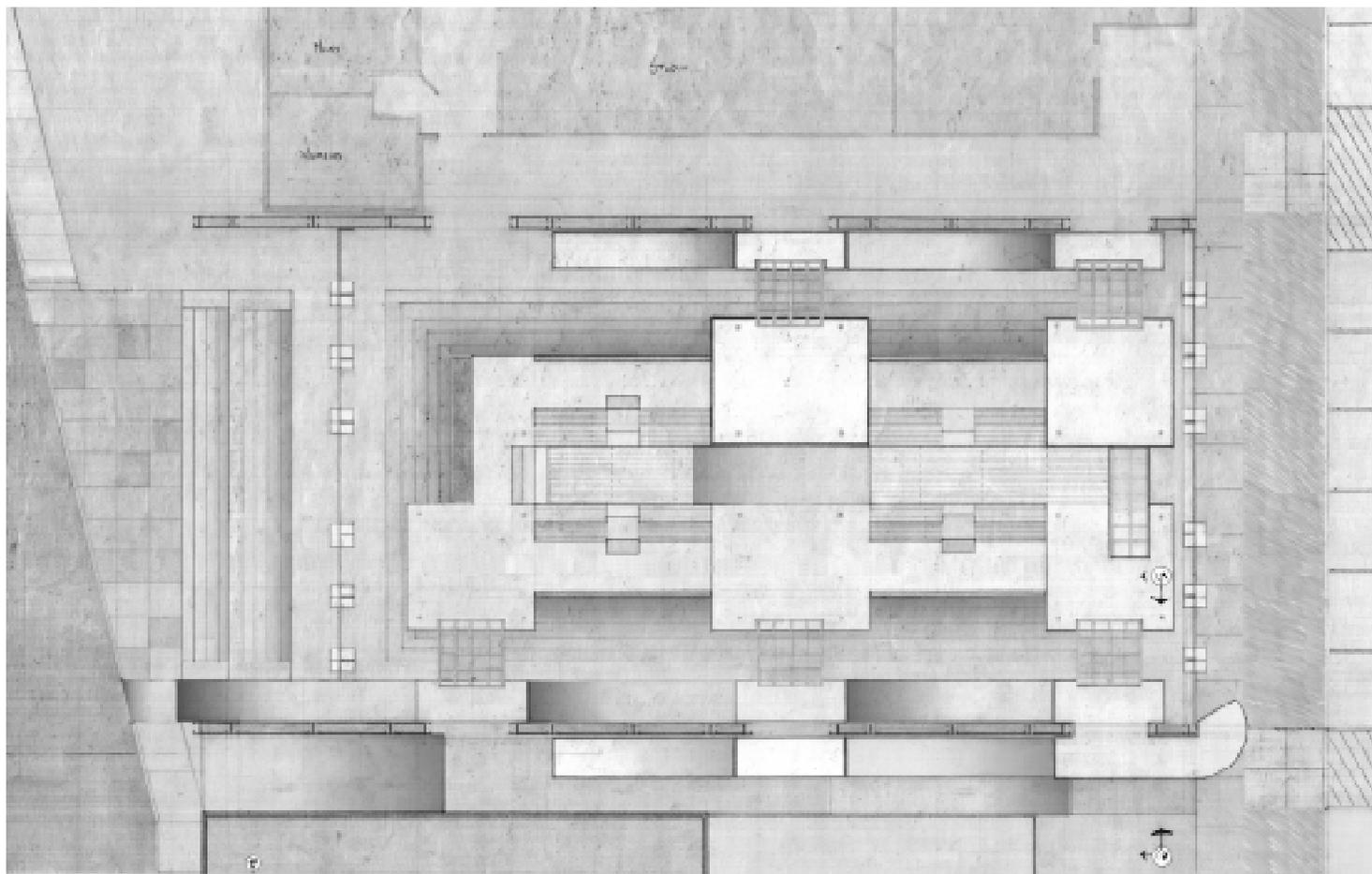
The thesis has been an exploration into how I approach architecture. Although I do not have a fixed position, this project has shown me that my accumulated experiences have and will come forth to guide my own approach for creating place. After reflection, I can say that this project was a vehicle for discovering two truths, both relating to a humanist position. Promoting good places is possible by creating habitable space and offering multiple ways to experience that space. Habitable spaces are based around human proportions, in turn giving opportunity for pause, rest, and interaction. The multiple views are created by an emotional vision. The spatial qualities are sketched, analyzed, and refined using drawings and models until the exercise results in a place to see, be seen, reflect and be inspired. This process is imperative to how I define architecture.



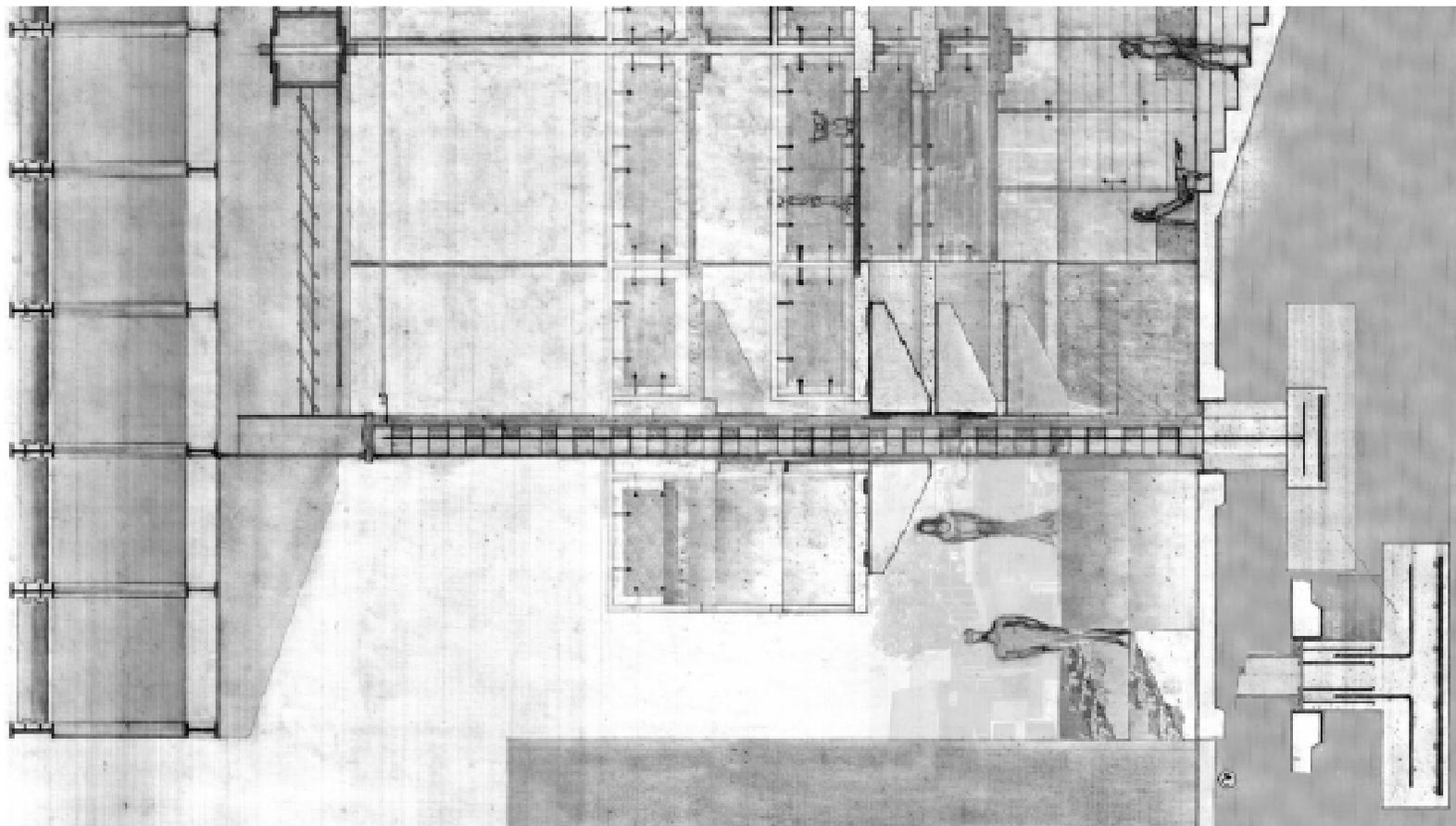
*floor plan, graphite on vellum*



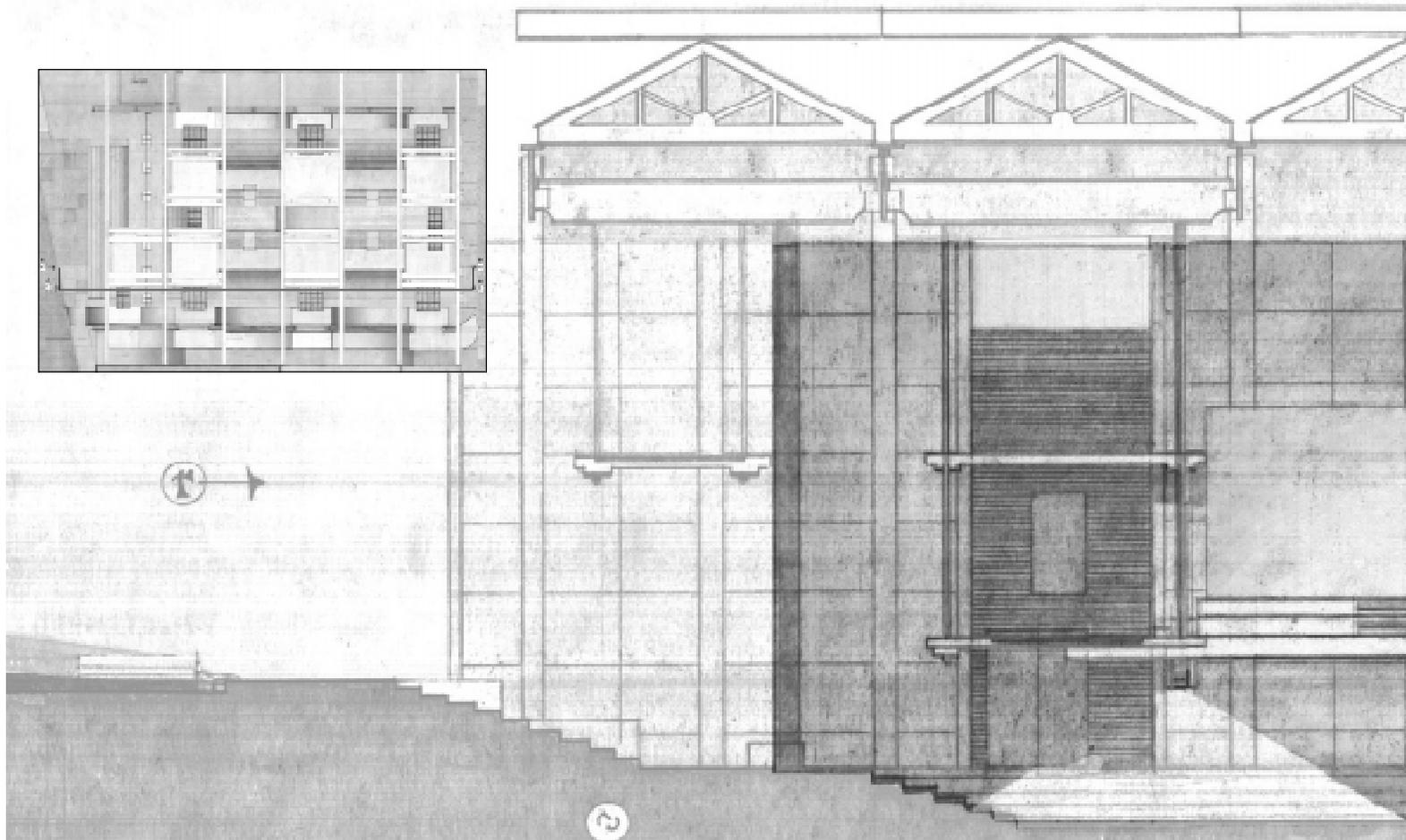
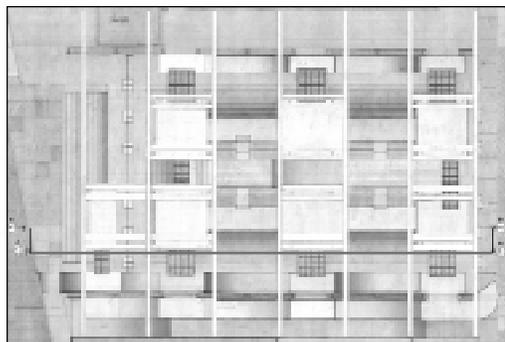
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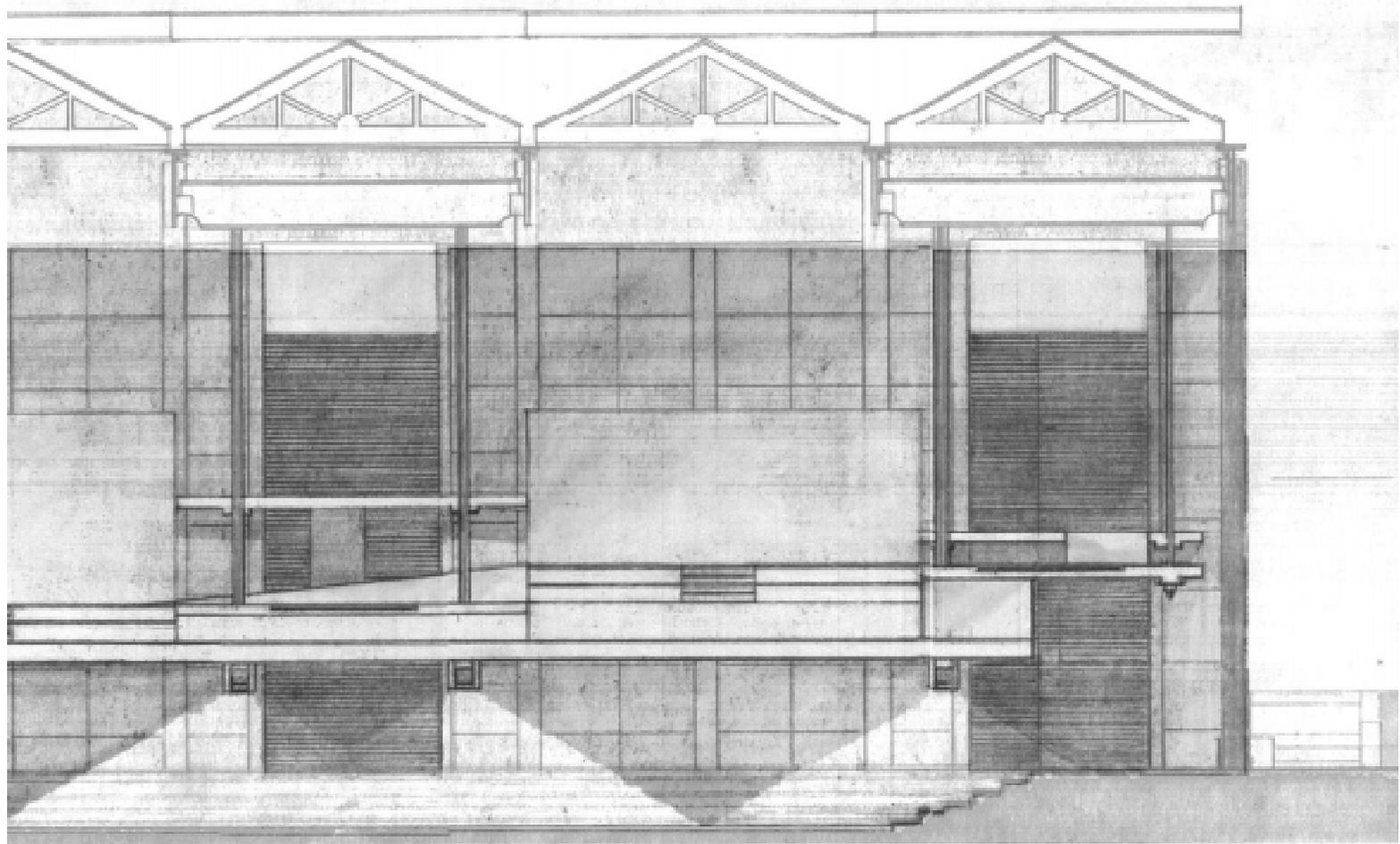


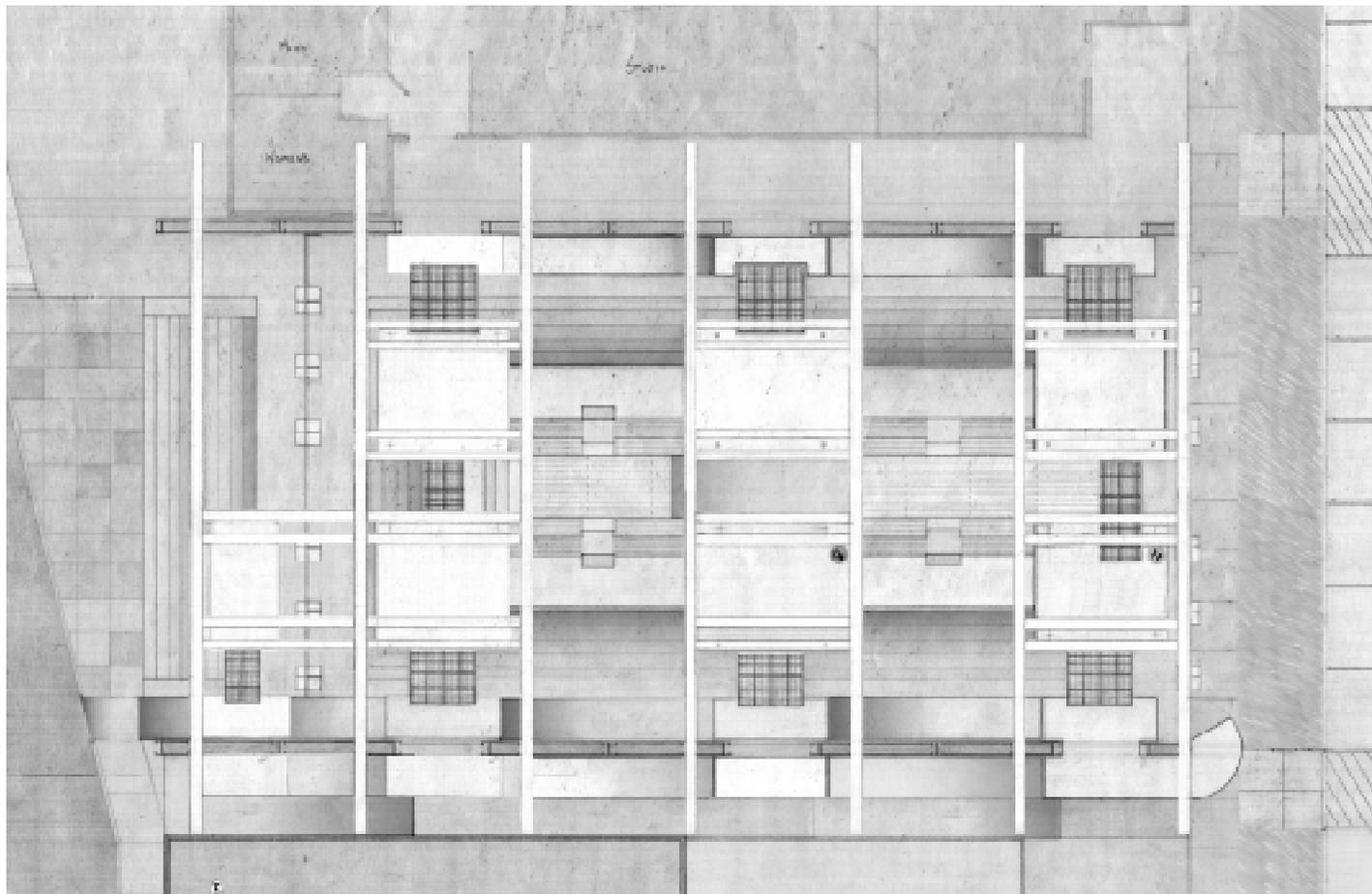
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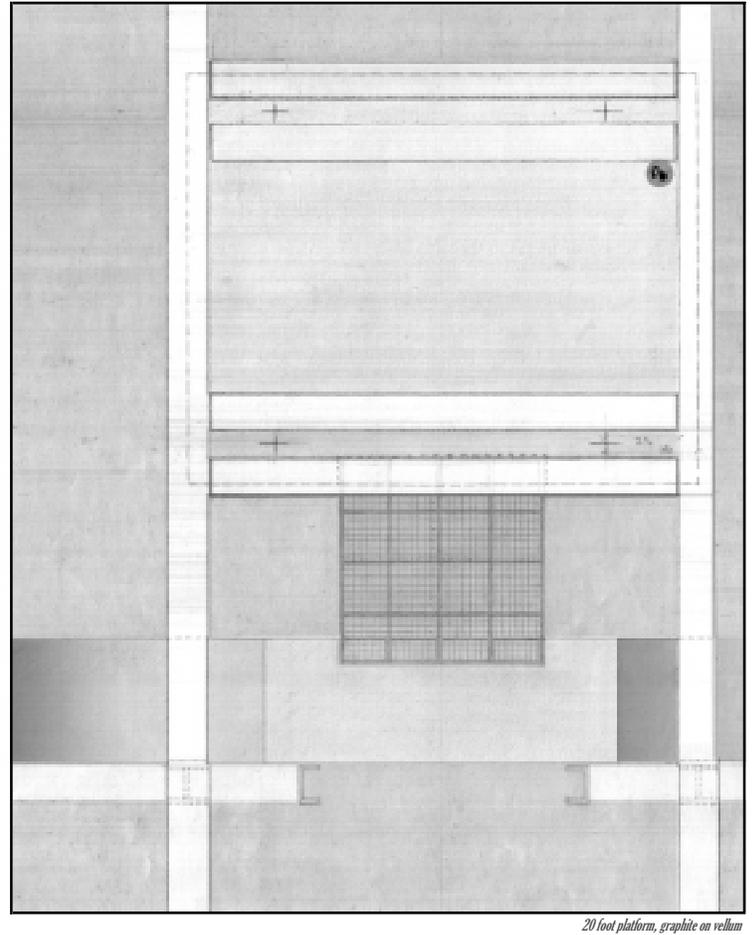
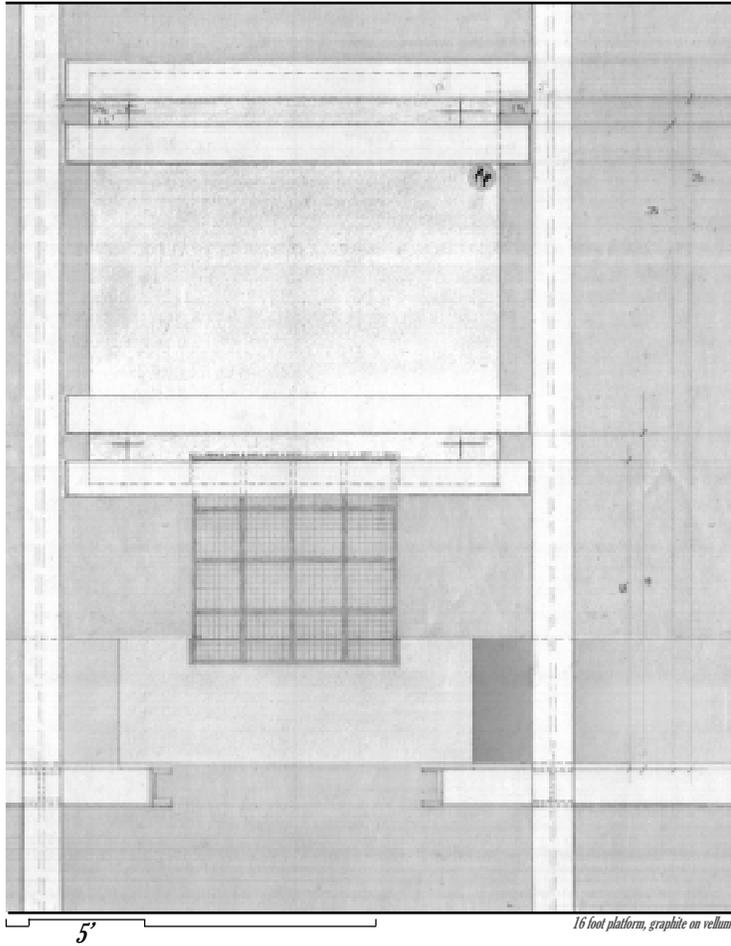




Haus

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# NOTES

- 1 All Aldo van Eyck images from:  
Ligtelijn, Vincent; Aldo van Eyck, Work; Birkhauser Publishers; Basel, Switzerland; 1999  
pages; 75, 103, 106, 186, 195, 199
  
- 2 All Carlo Scarpa  
Los, Sergio; Carlo Scarpa; Taschen; London; 1993  
pages 82-83

All images produced by author unless noted otherwise.

# B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- \* Eyck, Aldo van, Place and Occasion; Rightsize; The Interior of Time, Forum, 1962-63
  
- \* Ligtelijn, Vincent; Aldo van Eyck, Work; Birkhauser Publishers; Basel, Switzerland; 1999
  
- \* Los, Sergio; Carlo Scarpa; Taschen; London; 1993
  
- \* Piano, Renzo; Fondation Beveler- A Home for Art; Birkhauser Publishers for Architecture; Basel; 1998
  
- \* Strauren, Francis; Aldo Van Eyck's Orphanage: A modern Monuement; NA. Publishers; 1996
  
- \* Wiedenhoeft, Ronald; Cities for People/ Practical Measures for Improving Urban Environments; Van Nostrano Reinhold Company; New York 1981



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