

ON DANCING WITH ARCHITECTURE

Thesis | On Dancing with Architecture

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Thank you, *Susan Piedmont-Palladino, Jaan Holt, Paul Emmons* and *Marco Frascari* for introducing me to your wonderful notion of architecture.

Your education made me experience that what lifts architecture beyond mere buildings is its power of representation. Architecture is the appliance of our imagination to conjure up references and communication. For a meaningful edifice embodies universal cosmology as well as humankind's corporeal experiences. While my former education has mostly been driven by reason, you taught me to add the meaningful to the reasonable. Your thoughts have been enormously stimulating and nourishing to me. Thank you so much.

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Thank you so much!

"I would like to - sometime - build a theater which has natural light..."

Louis I. Kahn "Space and the Inspirations" |1967

Titled "*On Dancing with Architecture*" and in reference to *Merce Cunningham's* choreography, this thesis project is the notion of overlaying architecture as a third autonomous layer to the existing ones in the performance arts that are dancing and music. Since the project is equally concerned with the performers and the audience as well as with the general public, it shall contain a nonstandard performance stage for modern dance as well as general public space.

However, what does it mean to give shape to the notion of "Dancing with Architecture" in actual physicality? In order to investigate an appropriate answer to this problem, the project offers a unique opportunity of applying architecture's power of representation in rich analogies and metaphors. Therefore more than designing just a theater that serves for dance, this space shall be a place that, in its appearance as a whole and in detail, represents the tale of its initial challenge and investigation.

In addition, and as part of being a nonstandard stage for modern dance, the project shall critically review conventions in stage space and offers the opportunity to investigate it under a different scope, for instance through the question of how to increase the spectator's spatial experiences and interactivity with the performers, or through exploiting natural phenomena such as daylight, wind, water, landscape, time and gravity as stimulating factors to introduce new facilities in modern dance.

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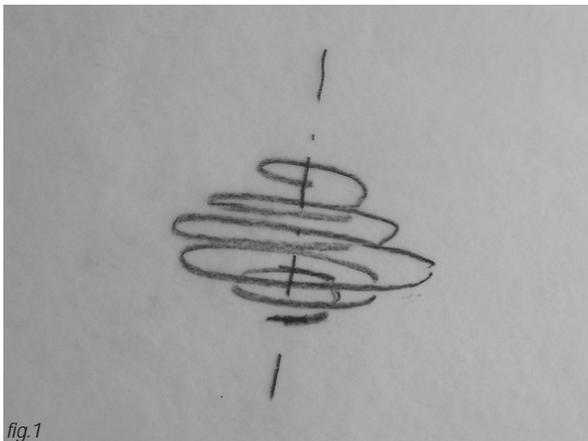
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The beauty of introducing dancing to architecture and architecture to dancing is the paradox of the moving and the static, yet both heading for the same intention, dealing with the power of representation accordingly to the rules of nature, acting within the framework of space and time. Well, in fact it isn't technically impossible to make architecture move, neither isn't it impossible to have dancers perform a static dance. However, the magical happens to be greater in our imagination than in reality. Let's say, it is architecture's virtue that excludes technical support in our question.

From the architects' point of view there is that inherent contradiction of how to give shape to an immobile building that is to represent a mobile art. The subject includes the potential danger to design a building that pretends to be in motion which is by nature deceiving. While architecture thus isn't able to dance, it nevertheless might be able to be moving anyway, in another, a more inspiring way. The challenge therefore is to work out an appropriate way of representation. For only our imagination is actually able to shift space into motion.

Strategically, it only can be the intention to design a building that radiates a stimulating spirit towards move-



ment on whoever user, the public, the audience as well as performers and choreographers. Wonderfully enough the subject is favorably loaded with metaphorical power.

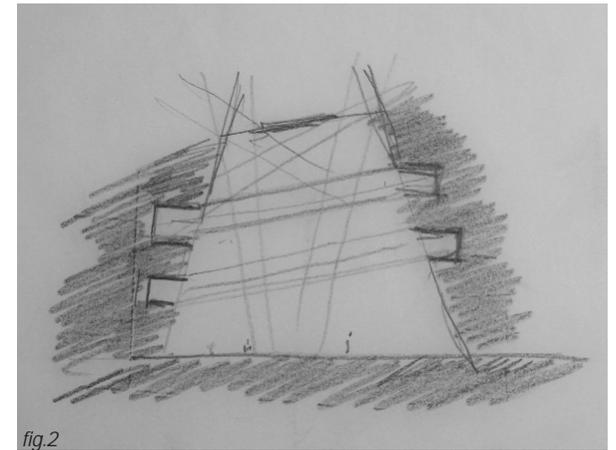
When, for instance, thinking of dancing and architecture at once, one of the first things that comes to my mind is a spinning top. Watching it rotate seems to me a magnificent dance, representing the power of nature. For when a top spins, it overcomes the power of gravity and reveals it to our eyes. It upgrades its being from a toy to a true sculpture, since it gains meaning in what it does; it makes invisible forces visible.

When it fades over to an upright position it becomes an illusionary still life to our eyes as gravity gains back its power and weakens the top down again. Just as a good sculpture's attitude, it expresses its temporal and spatial context perfectly; it is able to switch back and forth from the mobile to the immobile realm.

It even reveals inherent corporal qualities. Just like the top, man needs one leg to bear his body weight, while the other is needed to remain balanced. The act of remaining balanced as long as possible can be metaphorically read as the circle of life, when we learn to walk, grow older, weaken and finally pass away.

I can't help looking at a spinning top as an inspiring example for the inter-space of dancing and sculpture, of the mobile and the immobile realm. But its real suggestion is how to look at it.

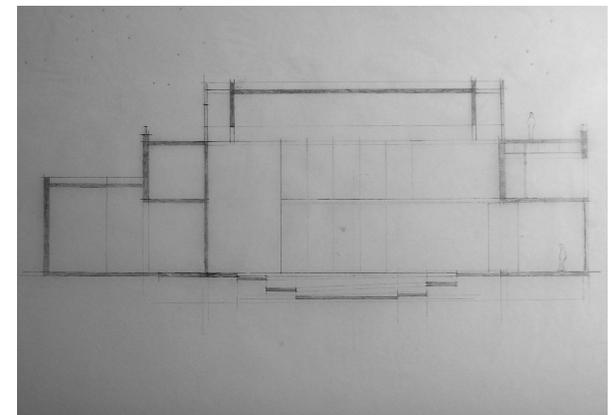
The top is neither meant to imitate dancing nor sculpture. It was never invented to be more than a simple toy. However through our imagination it reveals the quality of a dance. The point of this example is not its mimetic quality, not its capacity to imitate the look of something else, but its power to embody ideas and attitudes.¹ Here I might see a possible hint to our question



of how to portray a building, representing a moving art.

What kind of quality or attitude does a building to be equipped with in order to emit a stimulating spirit towards the moving? Is it the illuminating dynamic of our mindset?

Apparently, the dynamic is inevitably connected to time. For movement takes a certain amount of time to transform from one point to another. Referring to *Rosalind E. Krauss*, author and art historian, meaning is bound to time as well, that is the time of its recognition. In "*Passages in Modern Sculptures*" she writes that



"meaning does not precede experience but occurs in the process of experience itself".¹²

She points out two important aspects when puzzling about ways of representation. She basically says that meaning occurs as an immediate phenomenon in the very moment of the encounter between men and art. And she calls this moment a process, which is her reference to time, the time it takes to experience, associate, reflect, contemplate as well as to recognize and conclude.

However, the recognition of a building resembling something else literally, lets say a "dancing building" would be a very immediate and short one nevertheless it could be very powerful. Yet the moment of sensation vanishes with its recognition. Once the design purpose is figured out the sensation is gone.

A building, in order to resemble the art of dancing more authentically and abstractly is rather to imitate a

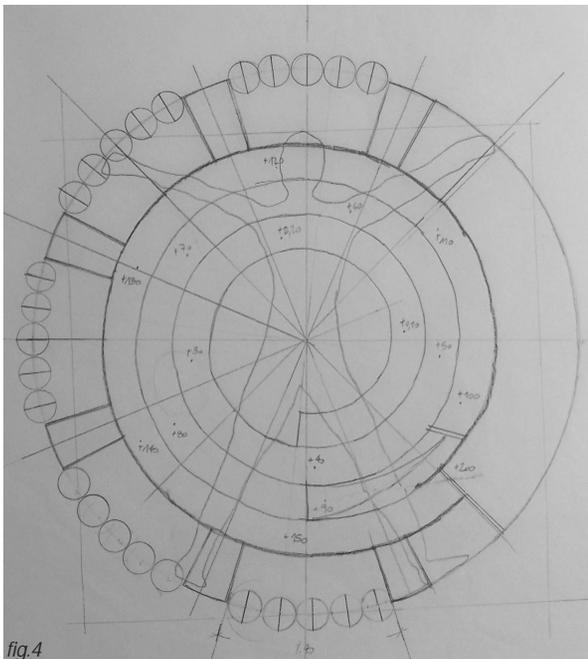


fig.4

dances' attitude instead of its mere appearance. Therefore its sensation must be extended over time just like a dance that takes its time. A building's sensation must even be extended over the whole time of its existence. Focusing on architecture's temporal character might be a plausible approach towards stimulating a dynamic feeling of space.

Through studying *Merce Cunningham*, revolutionary dancer and choreographer of the 20th century, I became aware of something helpful as well in that context. He says "but the moving becomes more clear if the space and time around the moving are one of its opposites - stillness."¹³

With "the moving", *Cunningham* of course denotes to the movement of dancers, which implies that he requires a "quiet" space for dancing. A too busy space might visually compete with the performance. Yet the literal depiction of a "dancing building" certainly leads to a busier shape and therefore to more competition as well.

Furthermore, *Merce Cunningham* reminds us of what dancing and architecture have in common, their interplay in time and space. However, the difficulty is that architecture's presence is really spatially dominated whereas its temporal qualities are rather subtly present.

Gottfried Lessing, who is quoted by *Rosalind E. Krauss*, provides a very interesting understanding of the temporal character of a body in space: "All bodies, however, exist not only in space but also in time. They continue, and at any moment of their continuance, may assume a different appearance and stand in different relations. Every one of these momentary appearances and groupings was the result of a preceding, may become the cause of the following, and is therefore the center of a present action."¹⁴

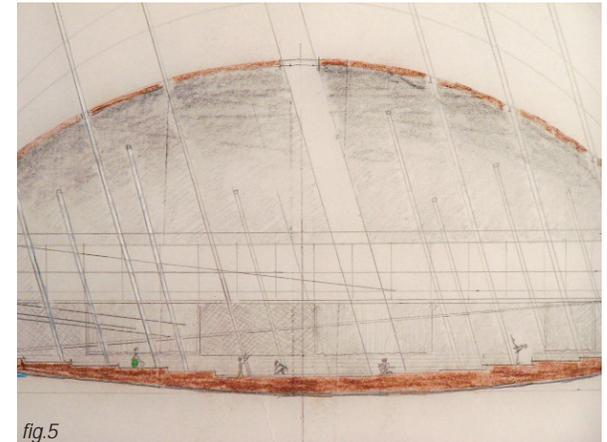


fig.5

Lessing gives us a highly promising clue, since his notion of the *always changing appearance and relationships* of bodies in space and time, proposes the promise of movement without physically moving. Is that the key of how to generate "movement" in architecture? And if so what is the generator?

Well, the long-term changes that apply to buildings are most likely traces of weathering. They indeed make visible a transformation of buildings' appearances yet a connection to the art of dancing doesn't occur in this

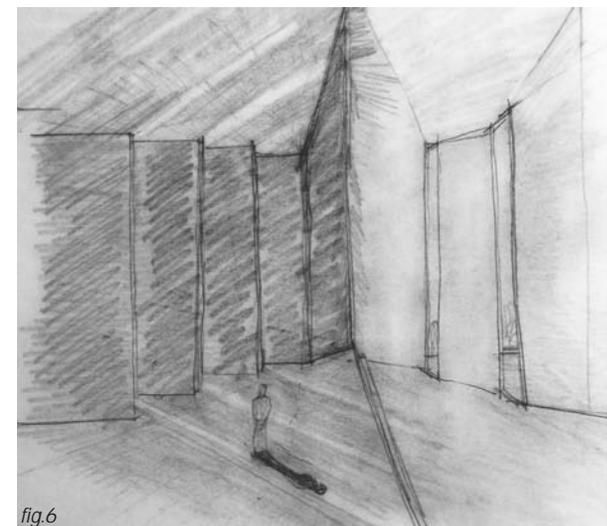


fig.6

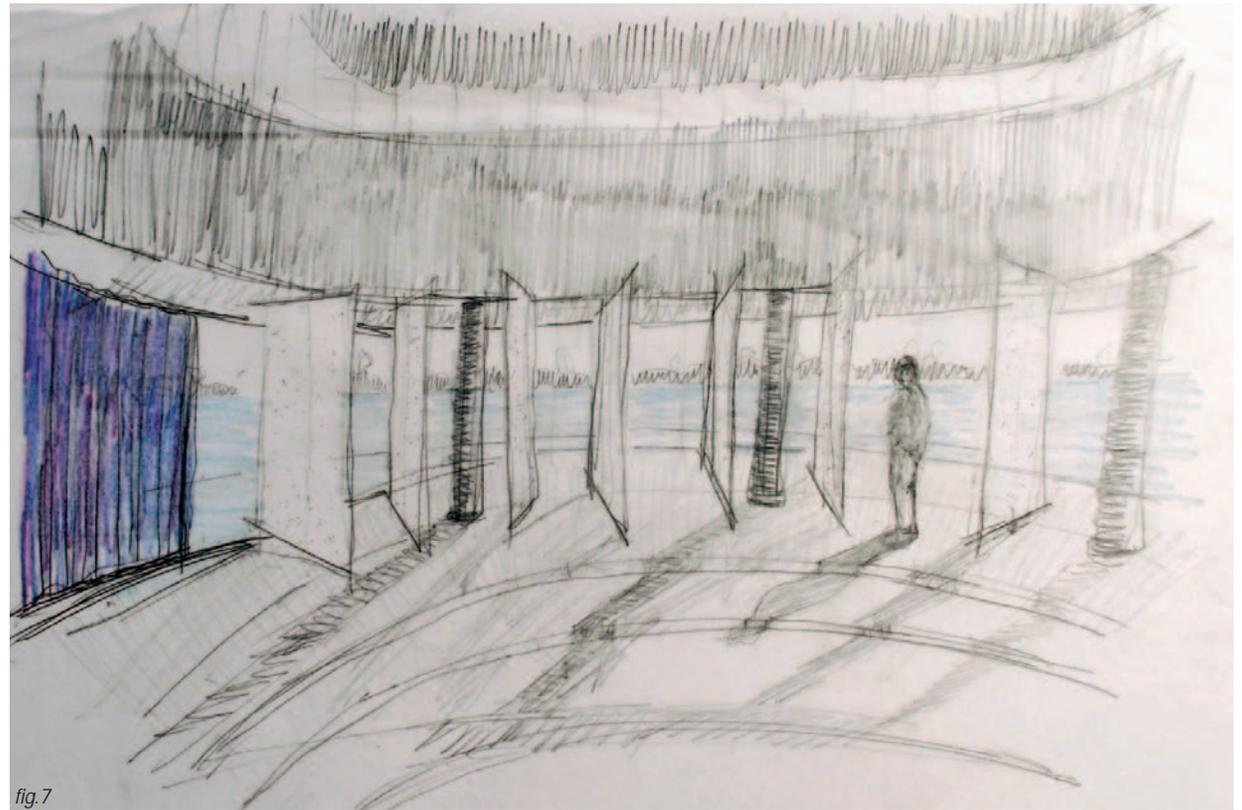
instance.

I think that *Lessing* alludes to light that changes the building's appearance every moment. And I find confirmation of my thoughts when looking at *Louis I. Kahn*, who teaches us that light is the giver of all presence⁵, a belief he shares with *Le Corbusier*, who calls the encounter of light and architecture a "magnificent play". His complete statement is probably the most famous quote in architecture ever: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light."⁶

However, light is an invisible media, therefore it must be precisely the moment when light meets architecture that shifts space into motion. For we perceive light in its daily shadow path. "Shadows are the no-light, necessary to see the light" writes *Marco Frascari* in his article "A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy"⁷

Louis I. Kahn again confirms our approach. He points out: "I turn to light, the giver of all presence. By will. By law. You can say the light the giver of all presence, is the maker of material, and the material is made to cast a shadow, and the shadow belongs to light." "...I can't define a space really a space unless I have natural light. And that because the moods which are created by the time of day and seasons of the year are constantly helping you in evoking that which a space can be if it has natural light and can't be if it doesn't. And artificial light-be it in a gallery, be it even in an auditorium-loses one a great deal. I would like to - sometime - build a theater which has natural light..."⁸

When *Le Corbusier* calls the happening of light meeting architecture a "magnificent play", does it lose its correctness in calling it a "magnificent dance"? And when considering the play of light and shadow orchestrated by architecture a dance, isn't this event the most



appropriate representation of movement in architecture?

However, the sun doesn't distinguish between different building types. For light equals to all buildings. Furthermore, *Le Corbusier* and *Louis I. Kahn* weren't primarily concerned with the subject of dance, but with architecture in general. So how then differs a building representing the moving art from any other building?

Here again I quote *Louis I. Kahn* whose statement gives such a wonderful direction. He writes: "You in music, as we in architecture, are interested in structure. To me the structure is the maker of light. When I choose an order of structure which calls for column alongside of col-

umn, it presents a rhythm of no light, light, no light, light, no light, light. A vault, a dome, is also a choice of a character of light. To make a square room, is to give it the light which reveals the square in its infinite moods. To get light is not just making a whole in the wall, nor is it the selection of a beam here and there to frame the roof. Architecture creates a feeling of a world within a world, which it gives to the room".⁹

Kahn describes the work of an architect as choreography. And in fact *only through awareness*, architecture becomes the elaborate choreographed reaction to the action of light. Precisely and as *Le Corbusier* taught us, the *learned* game of forms assembled in the light, which is nothing less than a dance - a wonderful dance

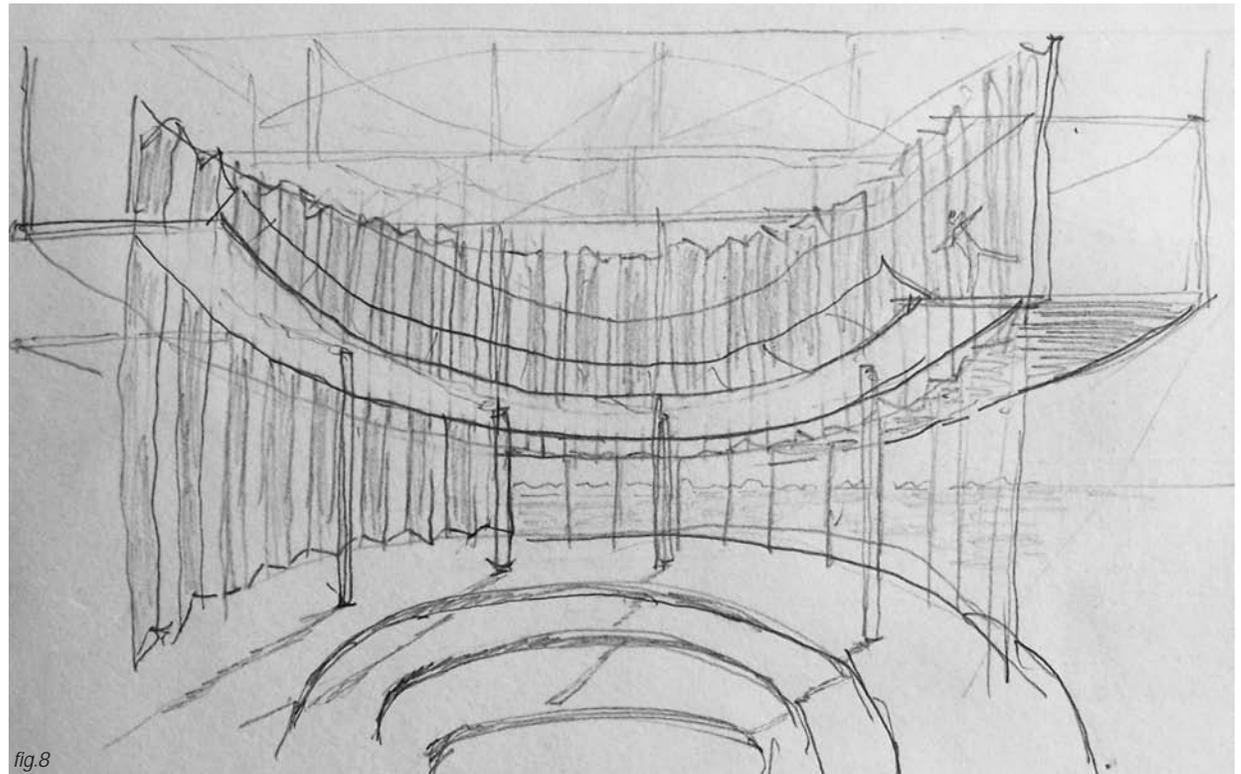
with architecture. Then the sensation of space is an ever-changing one; magically shifting into motion without moving.

Time therefore is given by the sun. For natural light behaves to architecture as music to dancing, as its metronome. In dancing, the rhythm ensures that the movements are in harmony or intentionally in disharmony with time. For that reason a dance takes place adjacent to the rhythm of different kind of sounds, spoken words or the simple tapping of feet on the floor. When *Merce Cunningham* speaks of dancing and music, he explicitly speaks of layers. Together with the composer *John Cage* he invented in the 1950s a very interesting correlation of music and dancing:

"By this time Cage had evolved a method of composing based on units of time, and in 1944 Cunningham adapted this idea by devising a solo, "Root of an Unfocus", in which movement and music came together at the beginning and end of sections but were independent of each other elsewhere. This was the start of Cunningham's belief that the independence of music and dance, conceived separately and then juxtaposed, offered him greater expressive freedom."¹⁰

Reading about *Cunningham* and *Cage* inspires me to introduce architecture to dancing the same way as music does, as another layer that is to juxtapose, frequently to intersect, and yet to remain autonomous. Their coming together shall be the festive experience of an ever new wonderful dance with architecture.

However, the awareness of space while following a piece is usually dimmed down at once with the light before the curtain rises. It is the stage setting instead that substitutes for the "real" architecture, taking over her most sacred venture which is to represent the cosmos. A theater is an institution of no light and as such *Louis I. Kahn* even rejects to consider theater space



being space at all. This thought, although technically might be proven wrong, sets a beautiful example of his way of thinking driven by inspiration more than by scientific truth. He desires to once build a theater with natural light.

To make it real is to lift the curtain and at once to reveal the sun, the river, frequent clouds and the horizon, which is to partition the remote landscape into the sky and the earth.

On dancing with architecture is the undertaking on the basis of my thesis project to summarize my thinking. Certainly I argue in favor of one proposal but respectfully and beautifully enough there are as many different ideas as inspirations. The sculptor *Isamu Noguchi* for instance writes in his biography that "Sculptures move because we move. ...Sculpture is the definition of form in space, visible to the mobile spectator as participant."¹¹

The specific approach however doesn't really matter, neither does my search for dynamical space in particular since there are other buildings standing for other subjects. What matters is the importance of *the awareness* of a building's representational power and how to apply it appropriately. For architects are communicators

and real magicians at once, studying the challenge of how to finally conjure up something magical, through communicating their imagination. This is what really separates architecture from a mere building. Meaning, as we saw it, reveals in the immediate event of sensation. That is the moving in us.

I would like to point out one final example that remains to be mentioned accordingly to the question of why the inspirational seems to be more exiting to us than the scientific truth. Apparently this is a matter of perception, since architecture is indeed not immobile! Just as our earth is smoothly and constantly rotating so are our houses - in constant motion.

Notes | On Dancing with Architecture

1| Krauss, Rosalind E. 1981 "Passages in Modern Sculpture", page 9.

2| Krauss, Rosalind E. 1981 "Passages in Modern Sculpture", page 30.

3| Kostelanetz, Richard (editor), 1992 "Merce Cunningham: Dancing in Space and Time; Essays 1944-1992 ", page 37

4| Krauss, Rosalind E. 1981 "Passages in Modern Sculpture", page 4.

5| Twombly, Robert (editor), 2003 "Louis I. Kahn: Essential Texts", "Space and the Inspirations", 1967, page 220.

6| LeCorbusier, 1931 "Towards a New Architecture", page 29.

7| Marco Frascari, in "A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy: The Corporal Theater of Meanings in Vincenzo Scamozzi's Idea of Architecture" VIA, page 1,4

8| Twombly, Robert (editor), 2003 "Louis I. Kahn: Essential Texts", "Discussion in Kahn's Office", 1961, page 108.

9| Twombly, Robert (editor), 2003 "Louis I. Kahn: Essential Texts", "Space and the Inspirations", 1967, page 224.

10| Nancy Reynolds and Malcom McCormick, in "Dance in the Twentieth Century, No Fixed Points", 2003, Chapter Ten "Schism and Transition", page 356

11| Isamu Noguchi, 2004, "Isamu Noguchi: A Sculptors World", Steidl Publishing

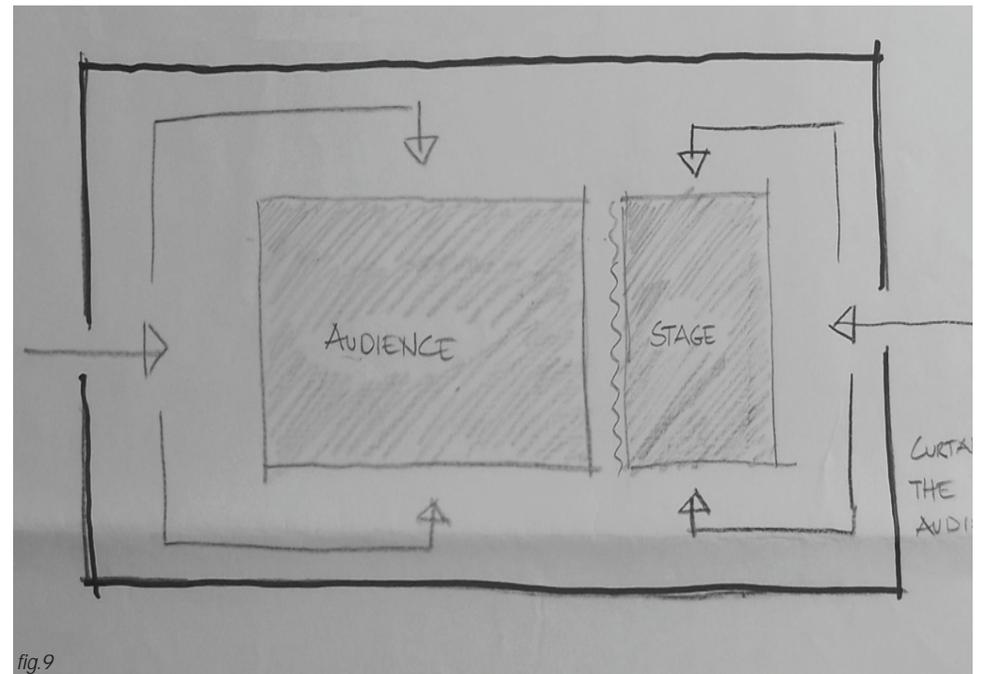


fig.9

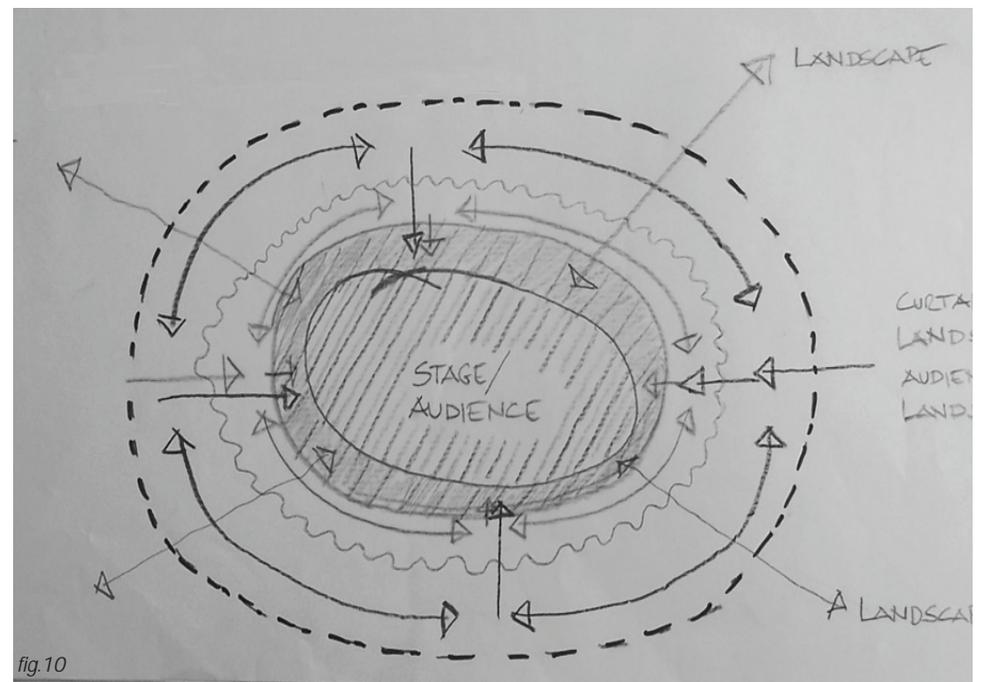


fig.10

Essay | Twelve Shadows

The following essay and the related video recording originated from *Marco Frascari's* lecture series "Drawing the Architecture of the City" at WAAC in spring 2004. The class was given the beginning as well as the closing words.

If the city is a large house and the house a small city the policy of drawing and therefore the translation from drawings to buildings and from buildings to drawings are the same in either scale - in the macrocosm of the city as well as in the microcosm of a house.

The "Twelve Shadows" originated in the lecture's accompanied assignments and document a site approach through drawing particularly the invisible in the visible.

The drawings are an attempt to make evident, the cosmological, corporeal and (collective) memorial qualities, invisibly embedded in the genius loci.

The twelve shadows is a complete tarot card deck that shows 12 figures in different postures that are captured in the very moment of time ("Augenblick"). Some are leaping, some are bending over, some are kneeling or standing in an upright position. Reminding of dancers, these figures are only showing the silhouette of a person. They don't appear elaborate considering the depiction of the different body parts such as showing the exhaustion of their movement in either their muscles or body expression. The drawings don't seem to be ambitious in order to represent real body proportions neither.

Although the gestures might be recognized as the postures of influential dancers of the last century remembering rudimentarily of *Vaclav Nijinsky* and *Merce Cunningham* for instance, their appearance is rather the projection of their shadows whereas the initial

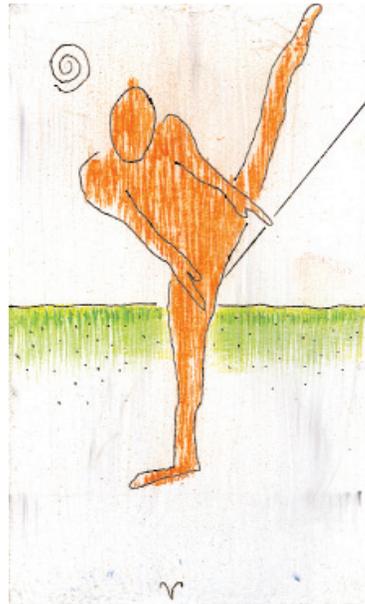


fig.11

source of projection is missing.

Beside the figures, every card always also shows the horizon, partitioning the scene into the sky and the earth as well as the angle of the sun in this very moment, a zodiac sign and a symbol.

The horizon first gives us a feeling of how the figure is positioned in space. Without the horizon a leaping figure could also be a standing or kneeling one. Therefore the place of the horizon varies from the very center of some cards to the bottom of some other cards. In the same manner the angle of the sunray and the zodiac sign give us a feeling of time.

The figures and the earth are represented with two colors correlating in a harmonic manner. According to these colors the twelve cards can be ordered into 4 groups which then according to the zodiac signs indicate a complete circle of one year starting with Aries in



fig.12



fig.13

March and being accomplished with Pisces in February.

The emphasis of these drawings is on the postures in relation to space, time and gravity.

When basically talking of these twelve figures in terms of shadows then they definitely have symbolic character according to the "threefold semiotic nature of shadows"¹. The silhouettes are not attached to its originating body anymore; they thus have been passing the transformation from the indexical sign to a 2 dimensional iconic towards a symbolic sign already. Through the drawing the objection of the drawer substitutes the original object of projection.

As symbolic shadows they cast their shadow speculatively towards a future edifice. In the German language there is that common adage that says somebody casts his shadow ahead, which implies that somebody has

future objectives. (It is however usually applied epically, meaning that somebody - a sovereign - has contentious intention of strife and war.

However, these 12 shadows on the tarot cards are the speculative shadows indexing towards the site's cosmologic potentials which are supposed to be revealed through a future edifice. They are therefore alike plan drawings, which are the shadows of a future construction.²

Besides that, there is also that striking ambiguous relationship between the medium and its content considering that these into the future casting shadows appear on tarot cards which are usually used in order to read about somebody's future fate.

Although the title implies that there are "Twelve Shadows", these silhouettes aren't obviously shadows that are projected by buildings but they are however the projection of how a future edifice will be in terms of embodiment, according to the shadow's symbolical character. (It is not saying how it will look like) Therefore, through their entities, the "shadows" make evident, the cosmological, corporeal and (collective) memorial qualities, invisibly embedded in the genius loci.

Starting from that point of view that we human's ourselves are a microcosm in the universal macrocosm³; the "shadows" project this particular attitude to any future edifice as a requirement. Hence these "Twelve Shadows" are telling the story of the architect's magic translation of making visible what is invisible but in the visible.⁴

However in order to make visible the cosmology and corporeality of the genius loci, time in its cyclic character and in its relationship to space (Zeit-Raum) is to be represented. Therefore the "shadows" are positioned in front of the horizon in between the earth and the sky.



fig.14



fig.15

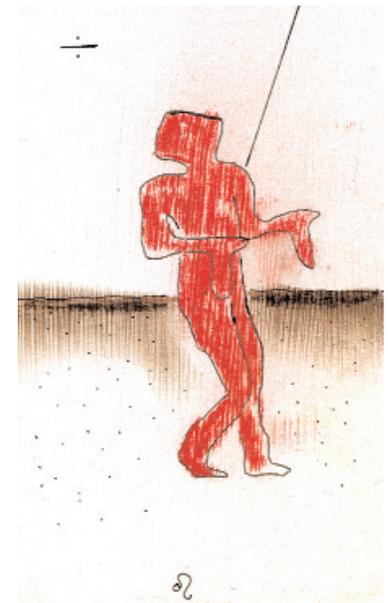


fig.16

Here they find their position in the cosmological dimension according to *Martin Heidegger's* fourfold.⁵ Besides the horizon, a sunray appears on every card indicating the sun angle of that particular moment in a year.

But more essential in order to represent time, light has to be visualized, since light behaves to architecture as music behaves to dancing - it is the time giving layer.

In order to visualize light something - a surface, an object, an edifice or a person has to be brought in to produce a shadow (and a reflection) working alike the reacting force to an acting force according to *Isaac Newton's* third law of motion, wherein *for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*. ("Gegenkraft")

Considering shadows as the result of choreographed human reaction to the action of light - they make first evident the present of light. "Shadows are the no-light necessary for seeing the light"⁶

Merce Cunningham, influential dancer and choreographer of the last century wrote in his essay "Dancing in Space and Time" from 1963: "...but too often the space was not visible enough because the physical action was all of a lightness, like sky without earth, or heaven without hell."⁷

According to Newton, the exact opposite is needed in order to make the invisible in the visible, visible. Cunningham wrote further "...but the moving becomes more clear if the space and time around the moving are one of its opposites - stillness."⁸

Besides the "dancer's" shadow quality the tarot card deck however contents another hint of cosmological embodiment in its organization as well as in its colors.

There are basically 12 cards representing the circle of one year indicated by the twelve zodiac signs on each bottom. Through the colors of the figures and the earth, the deck orders into 4 groups of three month.

There are four groups according to the cosmological fourfold as *Joseph Rykwert* explains it as followed:

"Since the fifth century BC, physicians agreed that the dominion of any one of the elements over the others in the human body produced varying humors; sometime later each element was seen to correspond to one of the seasons, or one of the world directions, which in turn correspond to the two equinoxes and the two solstices. Each one of the quarters was further subdivided along the ecliptic ring into three houses, making the twelve houses of the zodiac. The human body was therefore the representation of the wholeness in time, as a calendar year, while it also contained the physical structure of the spatial universe, from Aries the ram at the head, in whose house the sun traditionally opens the year at the spring equinox, to the Pisces the fish at the feet".⁹

The cycle of the card deck therefore starts with orange rendered "shadows", representing the sanguine humor of every new beginning, of "fresh" air, the springtime and the east where the sun rises up. It continues through its climax with the red "shadows" standing for the choleric humor of the summer time, when the sun passes the south and the temperature is hot like the element fire. Light brown rendered "shadows" then follow for the melancholic humor in fall time, representing the advent of everything coming to an end, when the sun descends in the west with the modest temper of the slightly cooling earth. Finally then there are the blue "shadows" representing the phlegmatic humor of the winter times, when the sun barely shines at all, never passes the north and the days are short, cold like water. Speaking of somebody's spring or fall applies the cards cyclical character to a lifetime as well.

As mentioned before, there is also a close relationship to *Martin Heidegger's* fourfold, introduced in his writings and lectures too. According to him a thing and

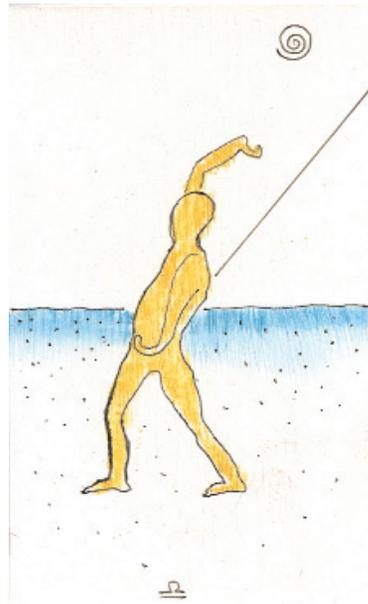


fig.17



fig.18

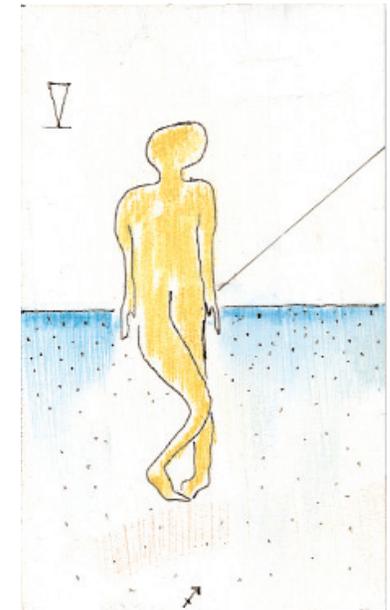


fig.19

therefore a built thing as well gathers the fourfold which defines it to what it is. It gathers by definition the following four essences which are the Earth as the serving bearer, the Sky (standing for the changes of the seasons and the weather, which by the way are in roman languages called "the time" - in French for instance "le temps"), the Divinities, the messengers of god and the Mortals, who are the human beings. "These are the fourfold, mortals are included by dwelling, that is by preserving the fourfold, setting it free into its own essence."¹⁰

Besides the "shadows", the horizon, the sunray and the zodiac sign, on every card appears another symbol which is meant to be a personally made up symbol, representing basically the said before and their application in principles on architecture.

There is for instance the eye standing for the very moment in time, ("Augenblick" - the blink of the eye), the harp, representing harmony and order which is

according to the Greek translation the cosmos, the double triangle mirrored in a line - one is outlined and the other is filled - shows the power of the "Gegenkraft". There are five lines representing music and therefore the time or there is a single triangle alludes to the balance in gravity. The spiral stands for the universe and astronomy according to the ancient Celtic cultures and the two dots mirrored by a line for the horizon distinguishing the earth and the sky. Then there is still the star, the golden cut and the soil.

Finally, taking a closer look on the postures itself one might expect a connotation of the particular movement to the month or the fourfold also; and yet there is now striking relationship to find.

According to *Merce Cunningham's* choreographer's stance the "shadow's" postures are not supposed to have a particular meaning. Cunningham experimented with motion for its own sake, indulging his natural fascination with actions from everyday life, particularly

those that seemed unfamiliar or awkward. He worked extrapolations from these observations into a structure, without assigning a meaning, so that the result was neither interpretive nor programmatic.¹¹

I would like to finish with a final note to the video recording of the "Twelve Shadows". Although the drawings lose their connection to the medium being a tarot card deck, they win with the overlay of music a new interesting dimension to me. The action of drawing is accompanied of four music pieces composed by *Iannis Xenakis* from his Chamber Music work. Interestingly the music and the drawing work together as *Merce Cunningham's* and *John Cage's* understanding of the relationship of music and dancing. Autonomously, every art appears as an individual layer that intersects randomly but leaves each other also alone again as *Nancy Reynolds* and *Malcom McCormick* explain in "Dance in the Twentieth Century":

"By this time Cage had evolved a method of composing based on units of time, and in 1944 Cunningham adapted this idea by devising a solo, *Root of an Unfocus*, in which movement and music came together at the beginning and end of sections but were independent of each other elsewhere. This was the start of Cunningham's belief that the independence of music and dance, conceived separately and then juxtaposed, offered him greater expressive freedom."¹²

Drawing is a speculative edifice - a mirror of the architectural cosmos that will help to recognize the foundational nature of architectural imagination and how these acts of imagination can be transmuted within the arts of thinking well and living well.



fig.20



fig.21



fig.22

Notes | Twelve Shadows

¹ Marco Frascari, in "A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy: The Corporal Theater of Meanings in Vincenzo Scamozzi's Idea of Architecture" Essay, page 1,4

² Marco Frascari, in A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy: The Corporal Theater of Meanings in Vincenzo Scamozzi's Idea of Architecture" Essay, page 4, "A building project and its representation in a design, for example, are the shadows of a future construction."

³ Joseph Rykwert in the "The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture", 1996, Chapter 3, p.69

⁴ Marco Frascari, in "Sollertia Architettonica" Essay 2001, page 1,

⁵ Martin Heidegger in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", lecture 1967

⁶ Marco Frascari, in A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy: The Corporal Theater of Meanings in Vincenzo Scamozzi's Idea of Architecture" Essay, page 4

⁷ Merce Cunningham, "Space, Time and Dance"; Essays 1952" Chicago Review Press

⁸ Merce Cunningham, in "Space, Time and Dance"; Essays 1952" Chicago Review Press

⁹ Joseph Rykwert in "The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture", 1996, Chapter 3, p.73

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", lecture 1967

¹¹ Nancy Reynolds and Malcom McCormick, in "Dance in the Twentieth Century, No Fixed Points",2003, Chapter Ten "Schism and Transition", page 357

¹² Nancy Reynolds and Malcom McCormick, in "Dance in the Twentieth Century, No Fixed Points",2003, Chapter Ten "Schism and Transition", page 356

The Site | Waterfront, Washinton DC

When getting off the Waterfront metro station on Washington's Green Line one experiences a surprisingly modern face of DC. Those who thought that the traditional townhouses of the nineteenth century are DC's only type of settlement make an unexpected discovery.

The built environment in this area south of the Capitol and between the Washington Channel and the Anacostia River distinguishes itself from the historical neighborhoods. One sees an assembly of mid-century townhouses, high-rise multi-family apartment buildings and occasional office towers of the same height. This development was brought into life as an urgent renewal plan of the Federal government in the 1950s when this area had degenerated into perhaps the city's most notorious slum.

The buildings tell a story of postwar modernism. Their facades are of exposed concrete and glass curtain walls, and in the best modern manner, often lifted up on

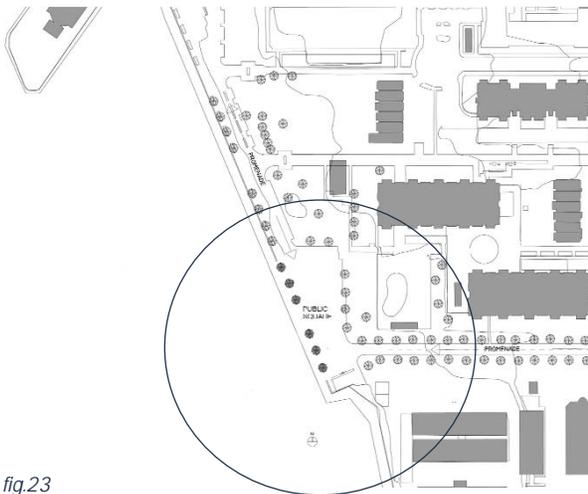


fig.23



fig.24

pillars from the ground. A scattering of balconies suggests a view of the Capitol Hill area and the rivers. Wandering around this neighborhood leaves Washington's strangely unreal enchantment behind, and introduces a more authentic urban style, which is more familiar in cities where high rise apartments have long been a response to housing needs.

When selecting a site for modern dance, the future edifice asks for reference and the sober modern character of this area responds very adequately. The context of large volumes punctuating nature, the water and the numerous green alleys, parks and promenades, conjures a stage setting out of the ordinary and shifts it into something imaginary and precious. A significant experience is the one alley sited between the last settlement and Fort McNair, and heads the Washington Channel and ends at the Titanic Memorial. Its straight passage with its adjacent trees invites movement that cannot be expressed with mere walking. Similar to the alley is the bizarre and somewhat pathetic posture of the Titanic Memorial that turns towards the passengers inviting them to stretch out their arms and hug the nothingness and the world.



fig.25



fig.26

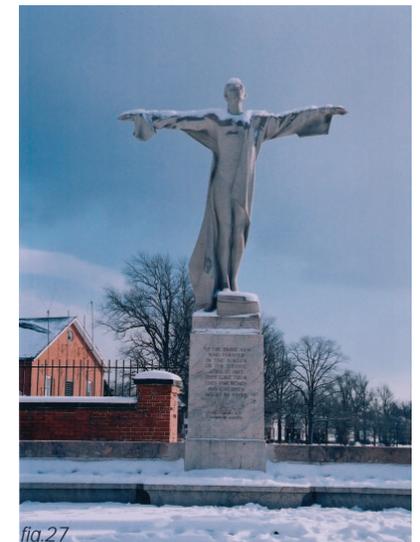


fig.27



"...and then I read Einstein by pure coincidence, where he said there are no fixed points in space and I thought, well, that's perfect, that, as far as I was concerned, about stage space. There aren't any fixed points. Wherever you are ... could be a center. Well that's a Buddhist thought, of course -- wherever you are is the center, as well as where everybody else is. But that seemed to me quite marvelous, and enlarging" *Merce Cunningham, www.merce.org*

"...but too often the space was not visible enough because the physical action was all of a lightness, like sky without earth, or heaven without hell."
Merce Cunningham, "Space, Time and Dance" 1952

"Dancing for me is movement in time and space. Its possibilities are bound only by our imaginations and our two legs. As far back as I can remember, I've always had an appetite for movement...I don't see why it has to represent something. It seems to me it is what it is... it's a necessity...it goes on. Many people do it. You don't have to have a reason to do it. You can just do it." *Merce Cunningham, www.merce.org*

Considering shadows as the result of choreographed human reaction to the action of light – they make first evident the present of light. *Author's note*

"Dancing is a visible action of life"
Merce Cunningham, www.merce.org

This project occupies a nonstandard performance stage for modern dance as well as public space in general. Titled "Dancing with the sun" it is the notion of exploiting natural phenomena such as daylight, wind, water, landscape, time and gravity in architecture as stimulating factors for new facilities and flexibility in modern dance as well as the notion to increase the spectator's spatial experiences and interactivity with the performers. Architecture as music and dancing will be a third individual layer of art
Author's note

light has to be visualized, since light behaves to architecture as music behaves to dancing – it is the time giving layer
Author's note

"By this time Cage had evolved a method of composing based on units of time, and in 1944 Cunningham adapted this idea by devising a solo, *Root of an Unfocus*, in which movement and music came together at the beginning and end of sections but were independent of each other elsewhere. This was the start of Cunningham's belief that the independence of music and dance, conceived separately and then juxtaposed, offered him greater expressive freedom." | *Nancy Reynolds & Malcom McCormick, "No Fixed Points" 2003*

In order to visualize the embodied cosmology of this peculiar space, architecture has to be brought in working as the reacting force according to Newton's third law of motion " For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."
Author's note

"but the moving becomes more clear if the space and time around the moving are one of its opposites – stillness."
Merce Cunningham, "Space, Time and Dance" 1952

"Shadows are the no-light necessary for seeing the light
Marco Frascari, "A Secret Semiotic Skiagraphy"

"It is not just about stamina, or about doing something well, nor wanting to be admired. It is basically about love of and devotion to what you are doing, and a constant lookout for the possibilities it can provide to keep you going; to keep your dancing and your life alive."
Merce Cunningham, www.merce.org

"A use of time-structure also frees the music into space, making the connection between the dance and the music one of individual autonomy connected at structural points. The result is the dance is free to act as it chooses, as is the music
Nancy Reynolds & Malcom McCormick, "No Fixed Points" 2003



fig.30

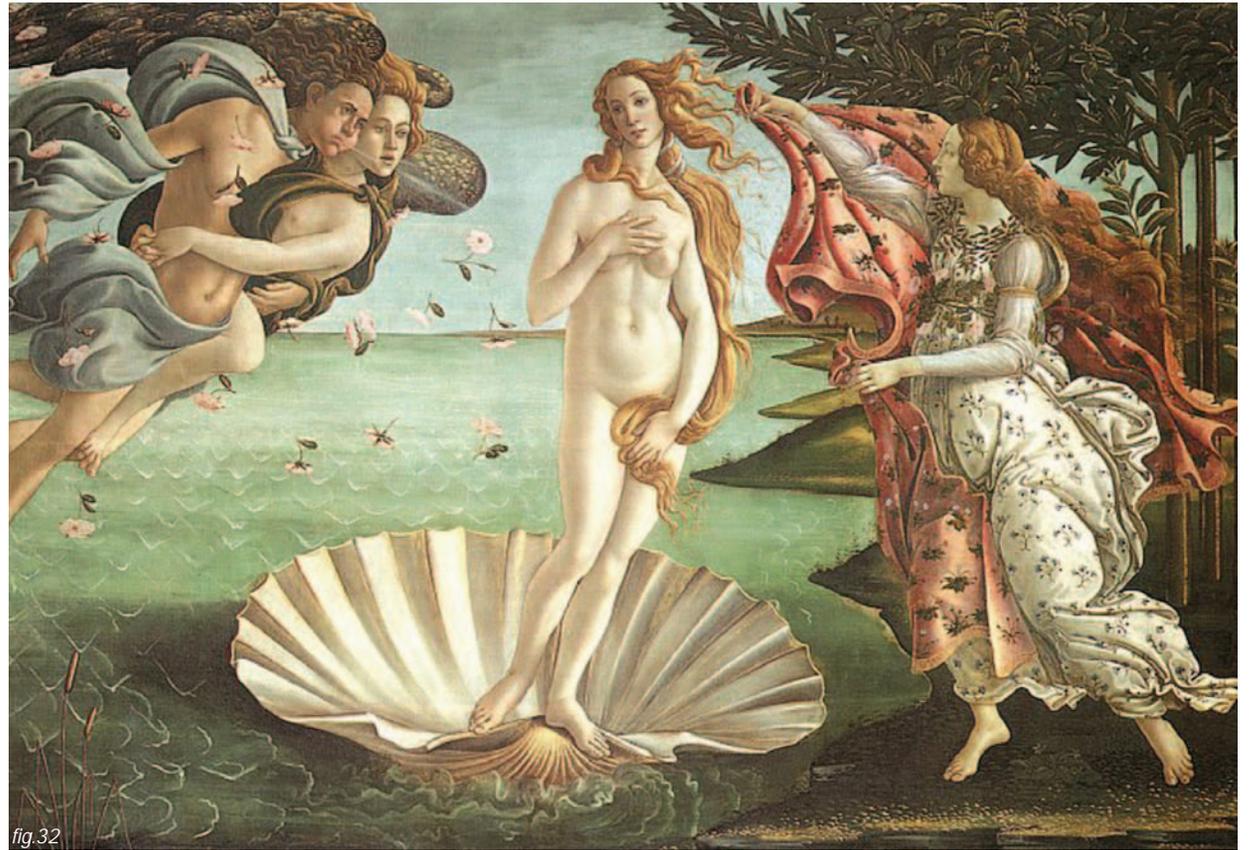


fig.32



fig.31



fig.33

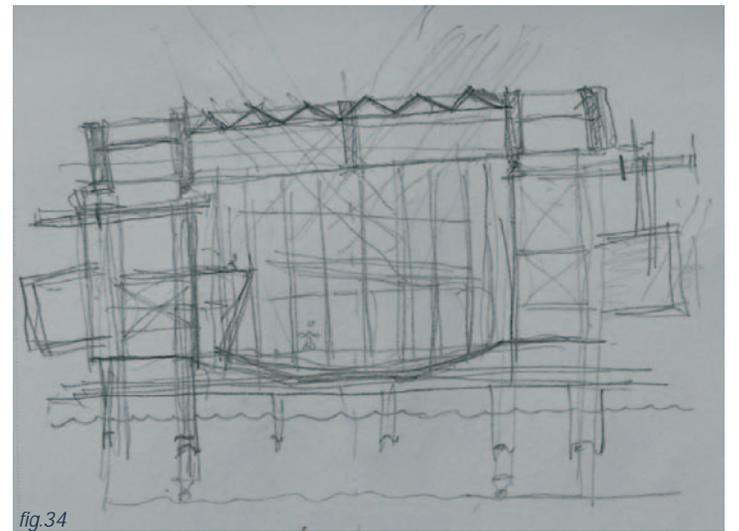


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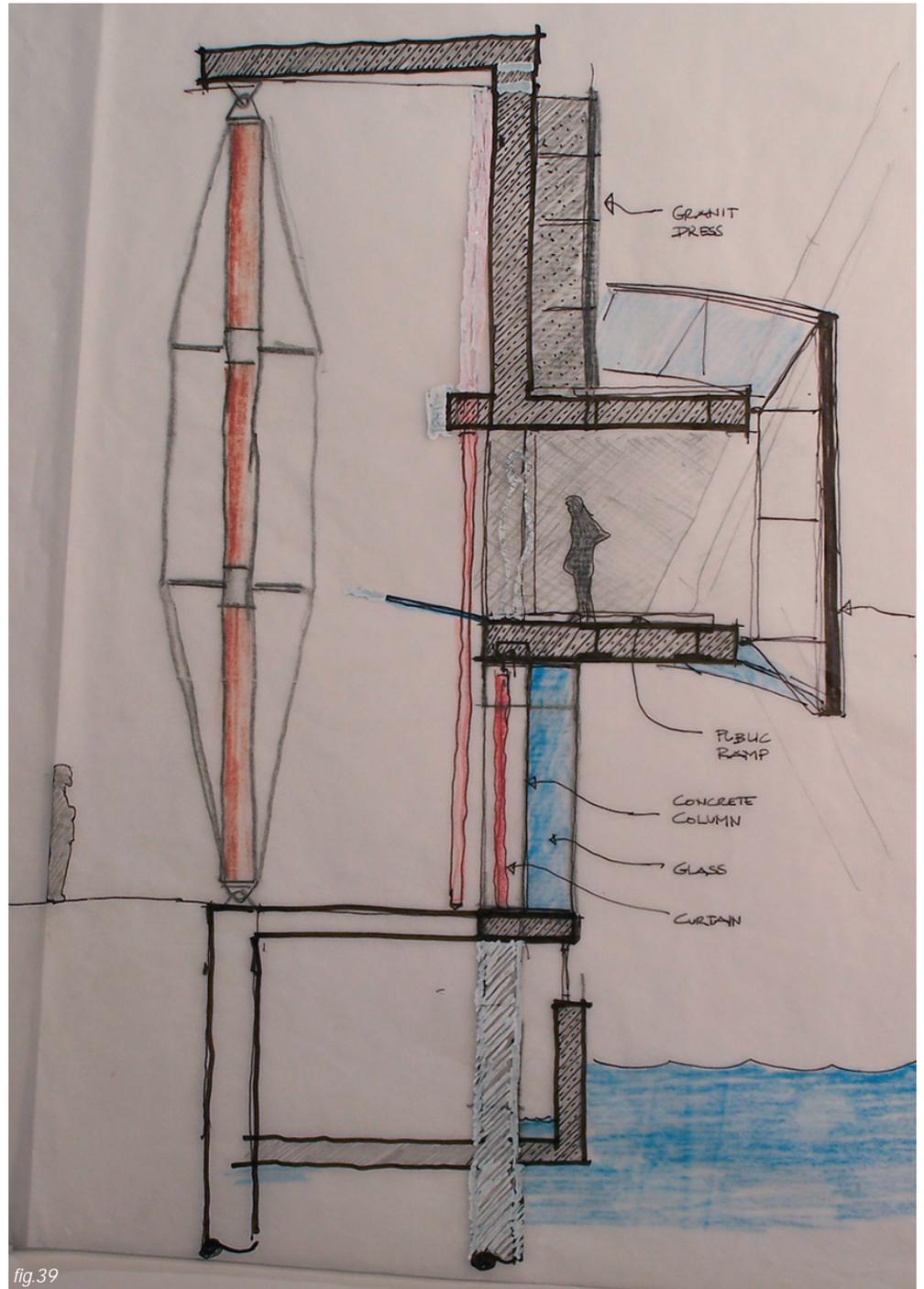
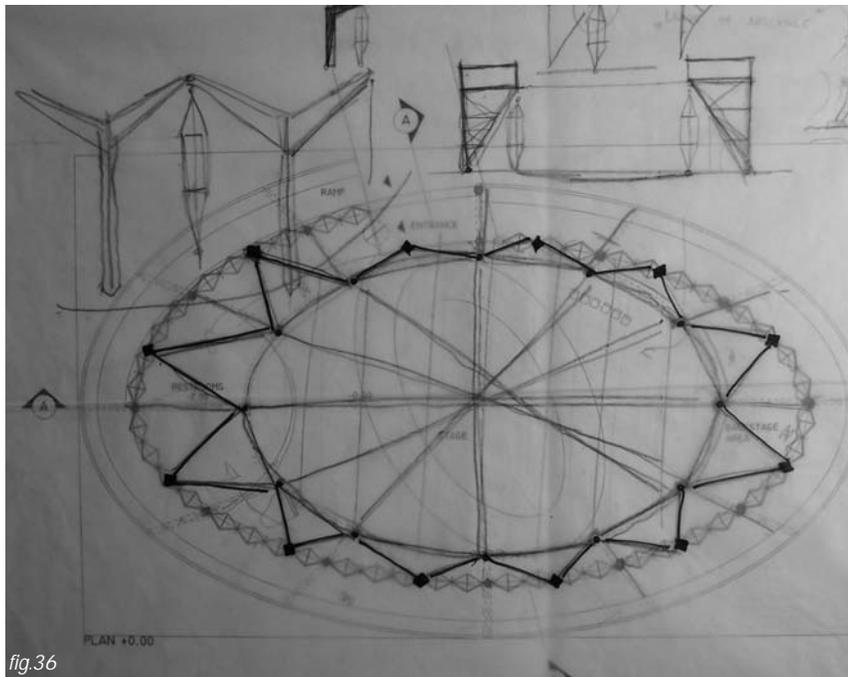
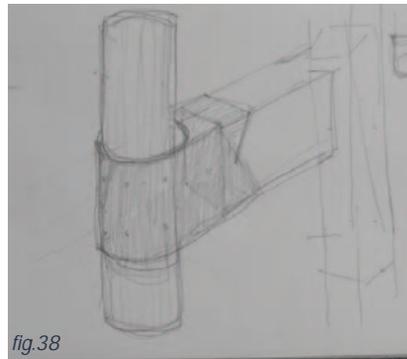
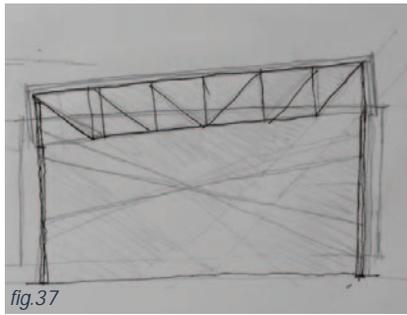
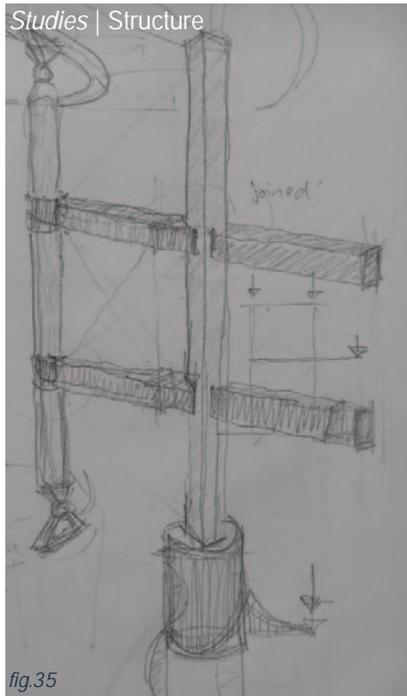




fig.40

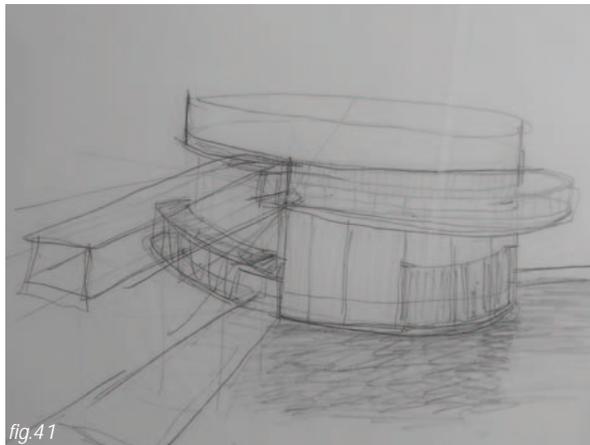


fig.41

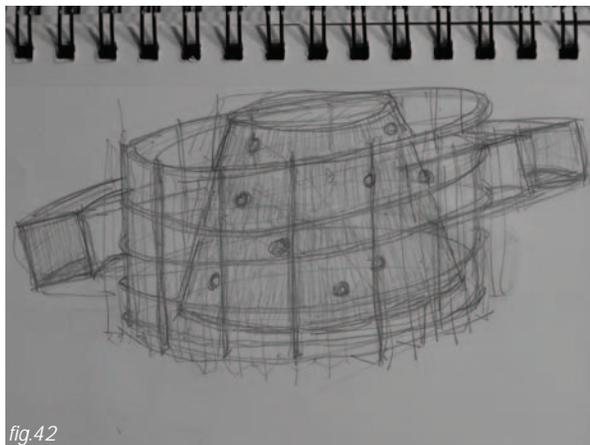


fig.42

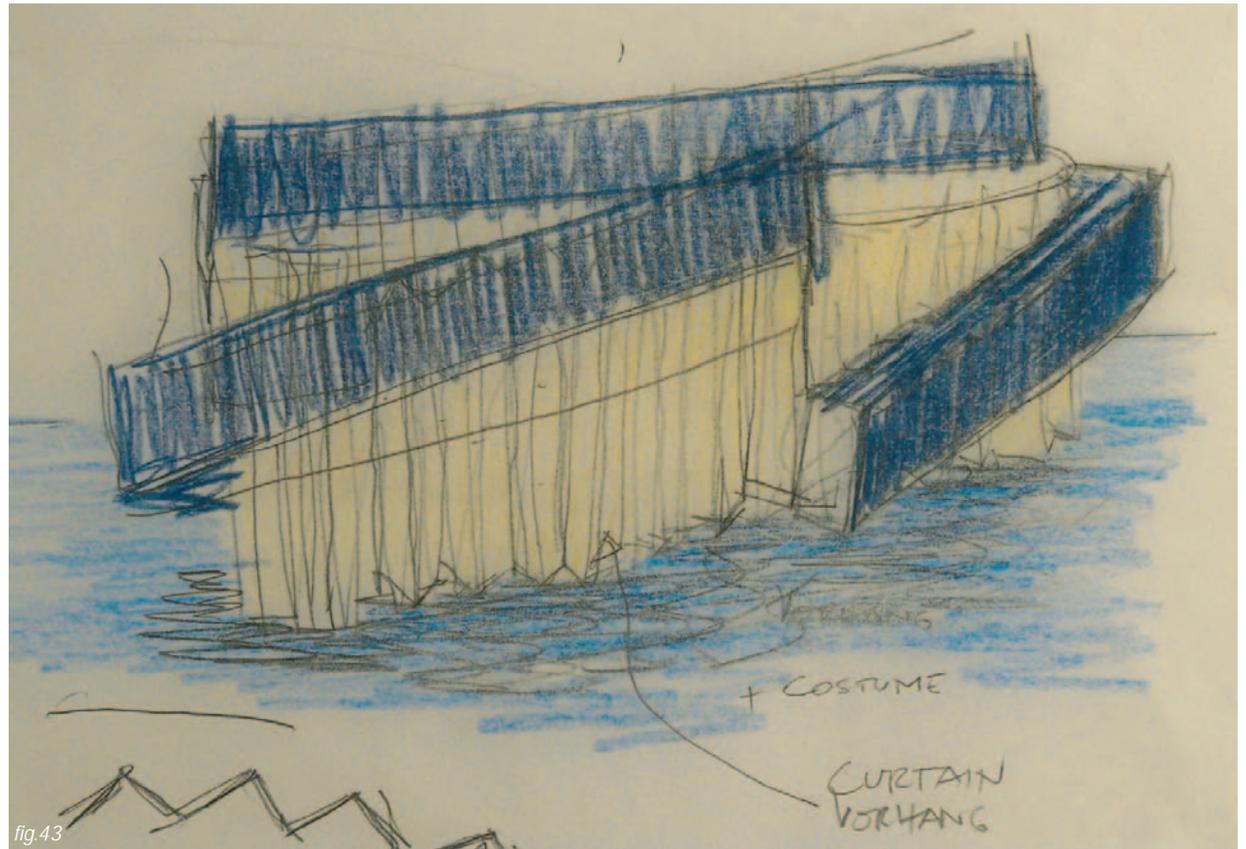


fig.43

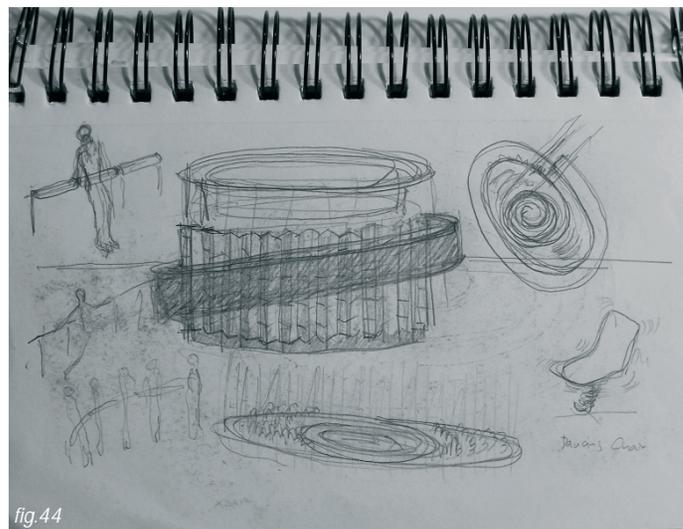


fig.44

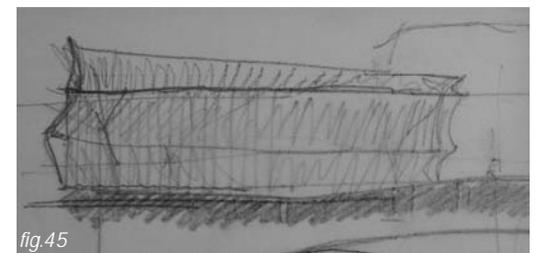


fig.45

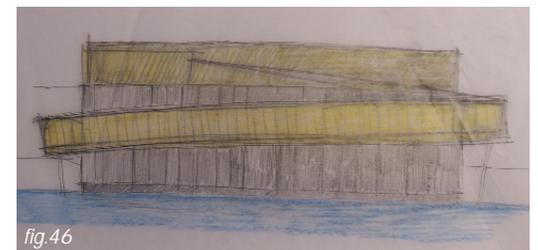
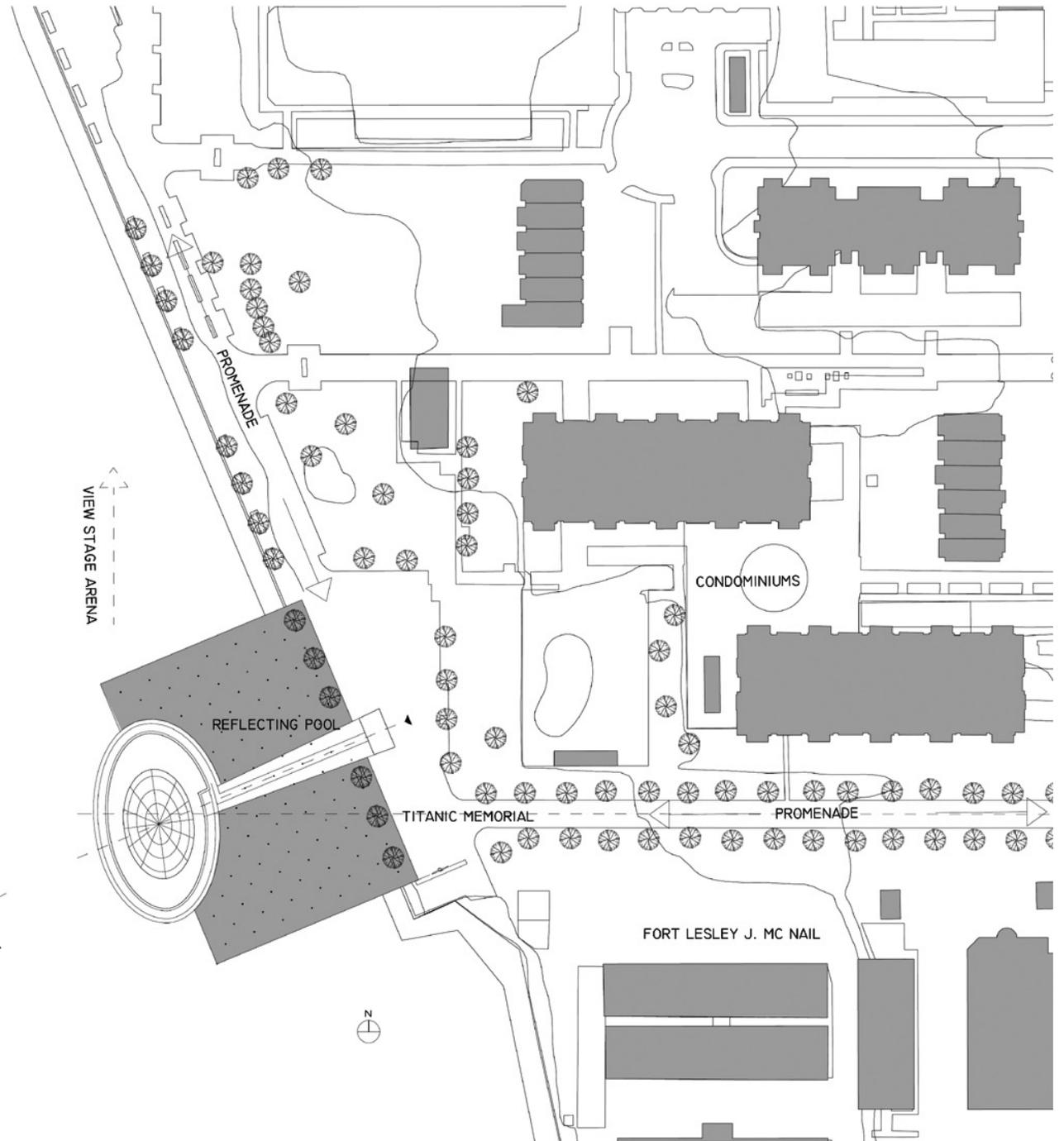
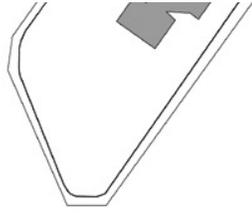


fig.46



WASHINGTON CHANNEL

REFLECTING POOL

CONDOMINIUMS

TITANIC MEMORIAL

PROMENADE

FORT LESLEY J. MC NAIL

VIEW WASHINGTON MONUMENT

VIEW EAST POTOMAC PARK

VIEW STAGE ARENA

SITEPLAN

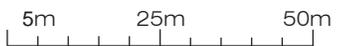
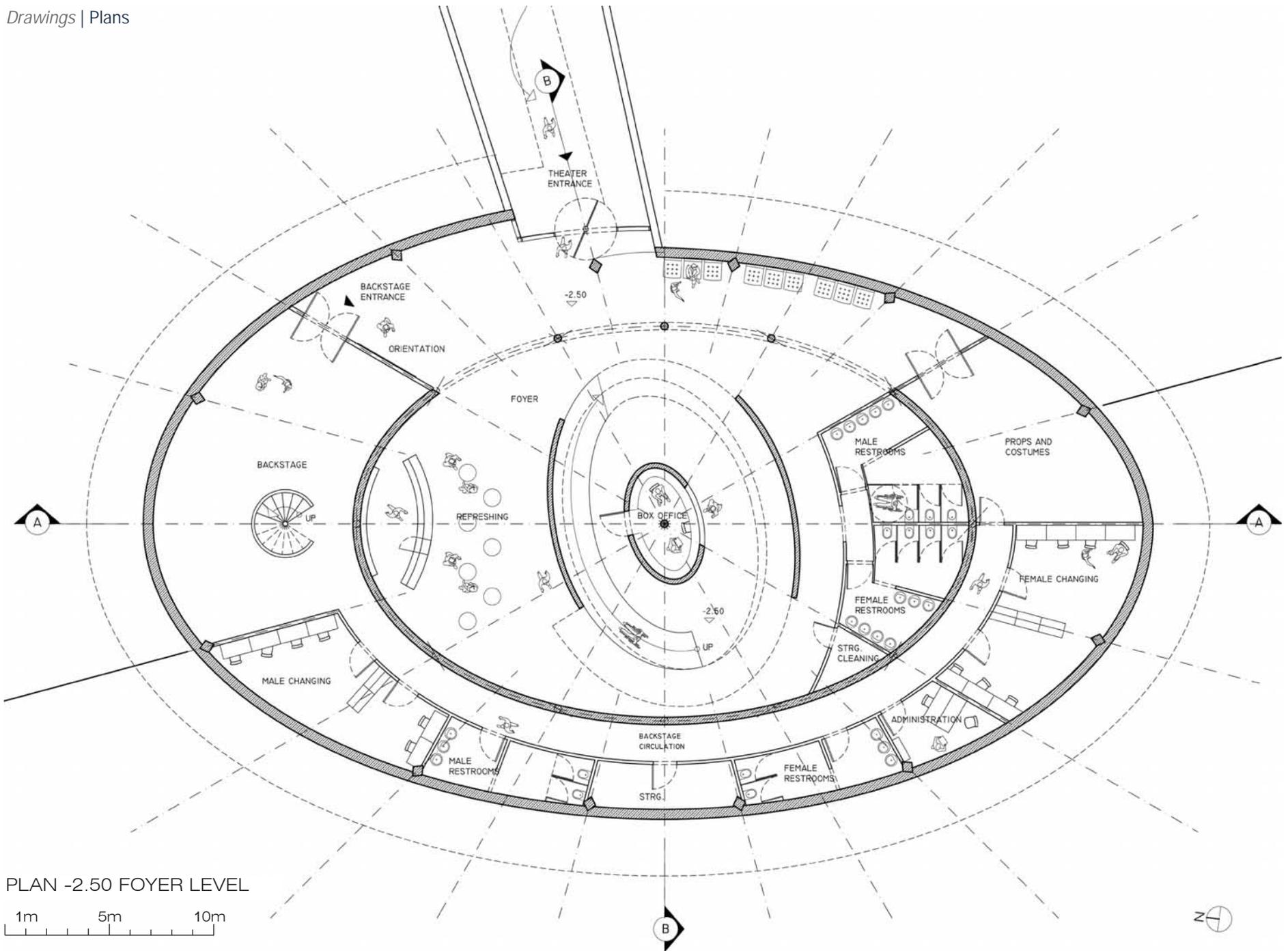


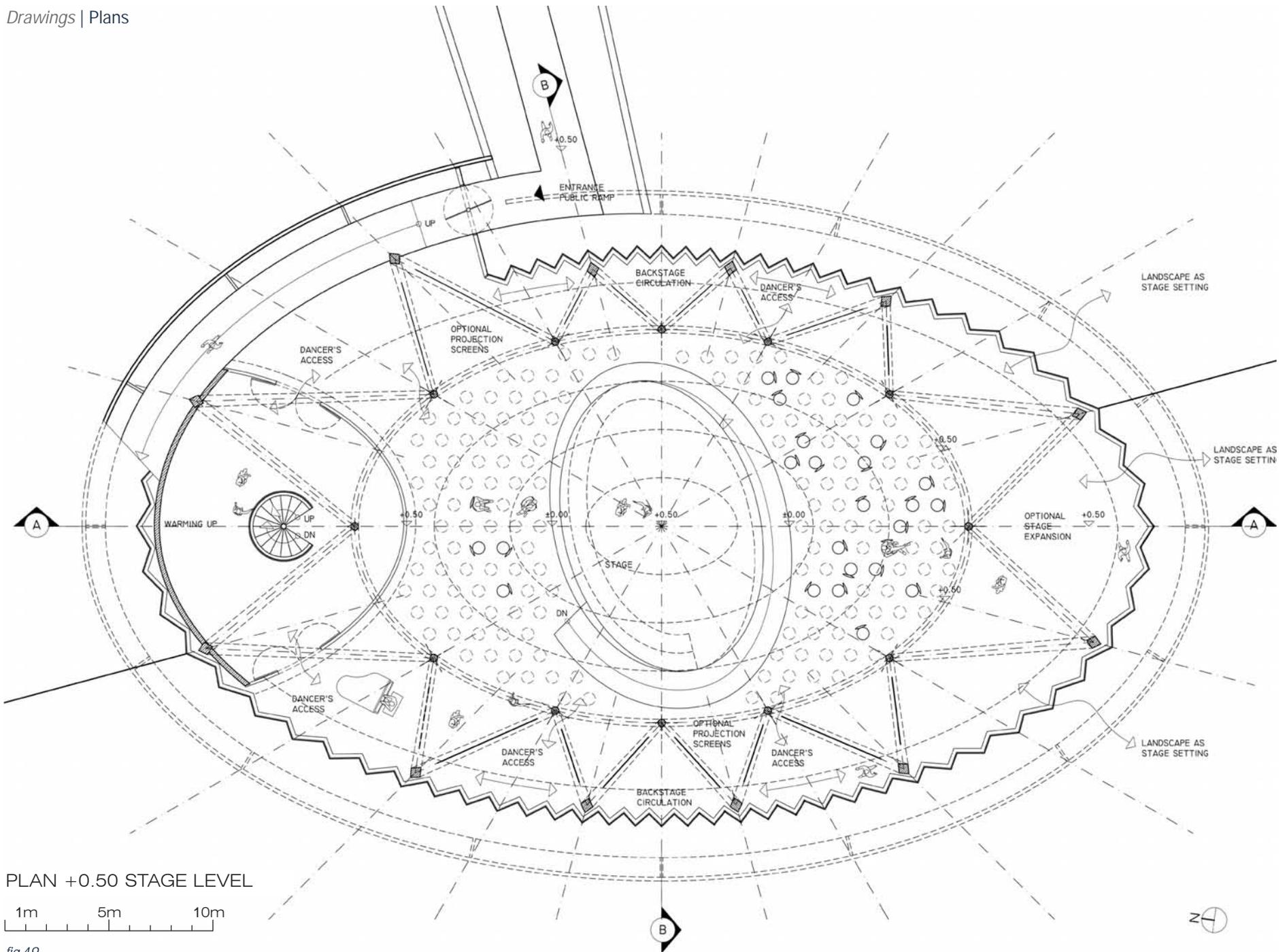
fig.47



PLAN -2.50 FOYER LEVEL



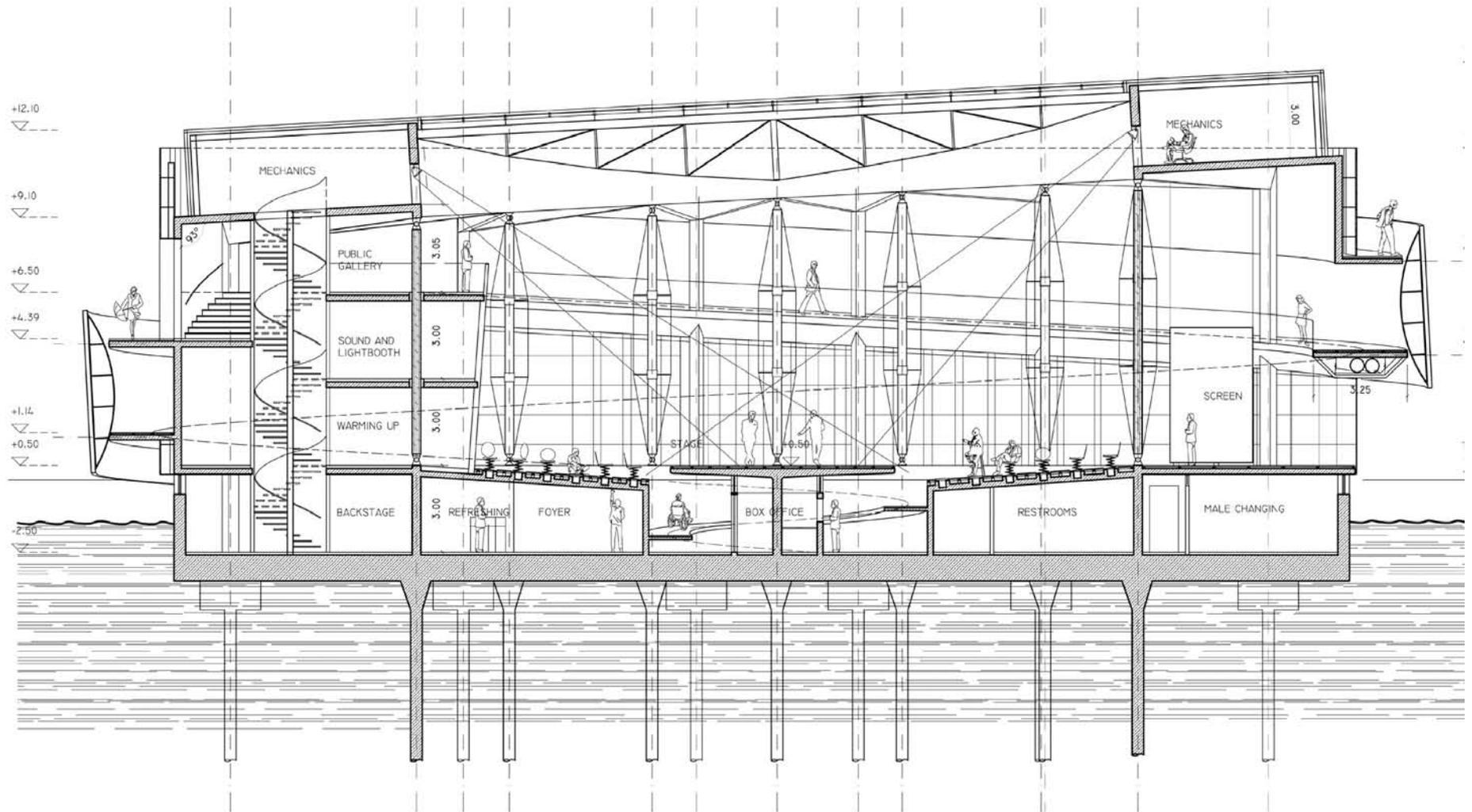
fig.48



PLAN +0.50 STAGE LEVEL



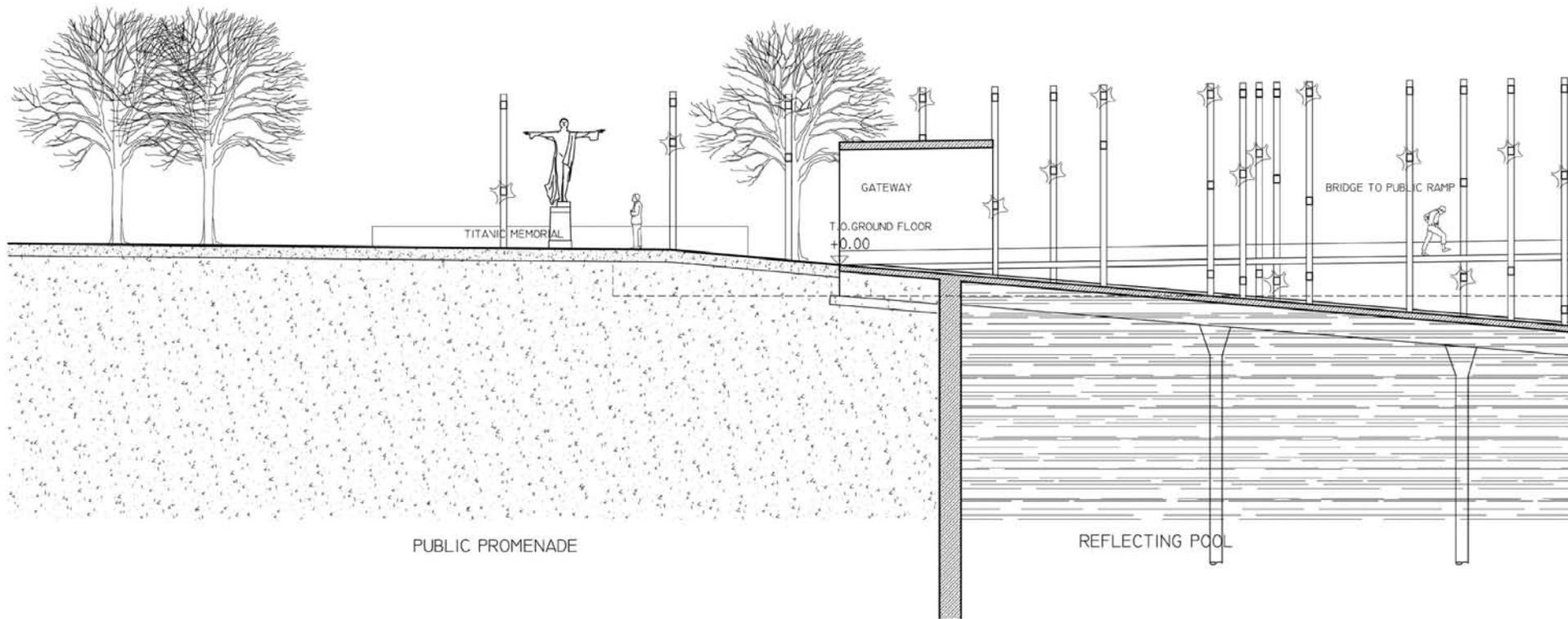
fig.49



SECTION A-A

1m 5m 10m

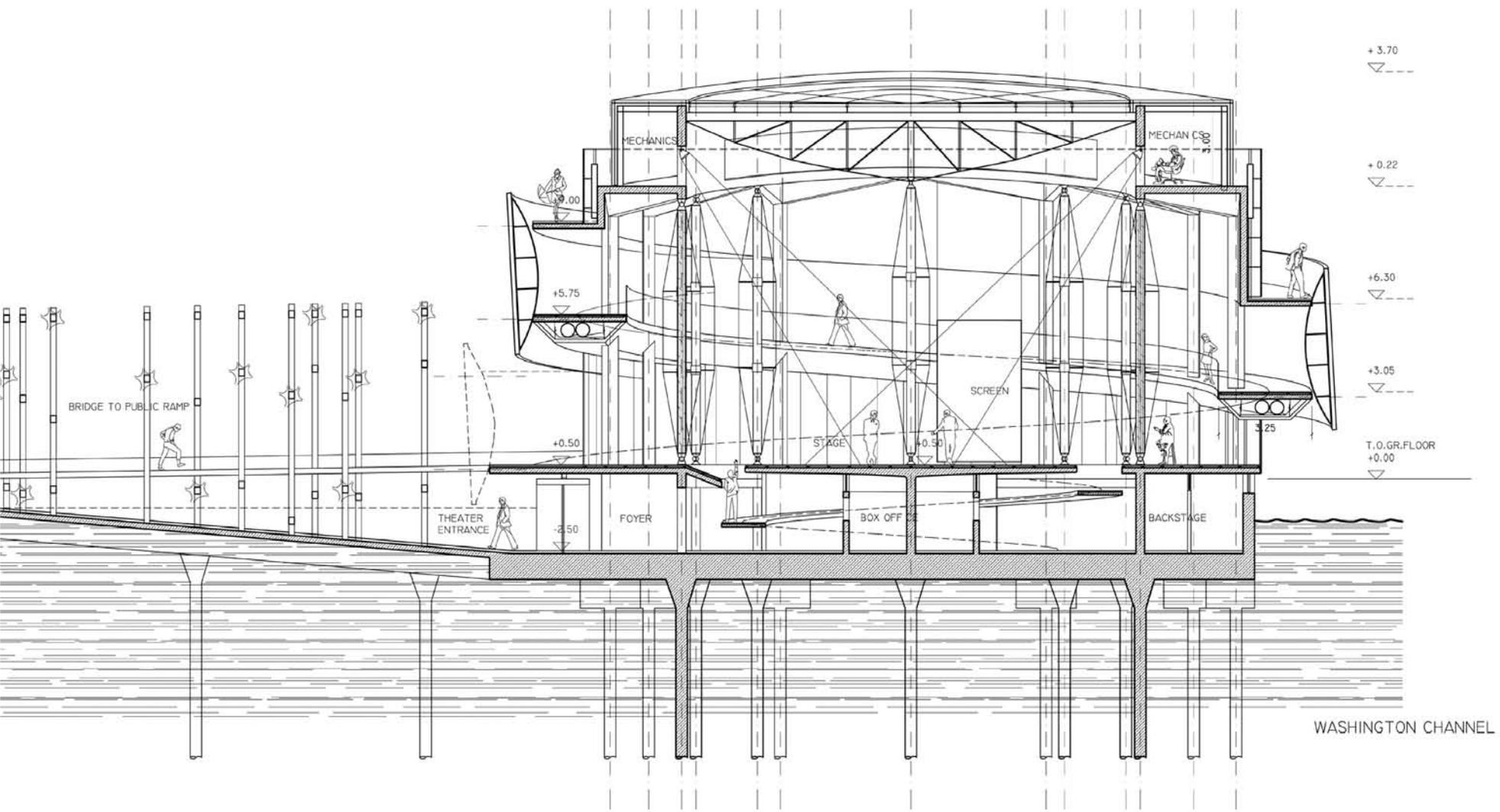
fig.52



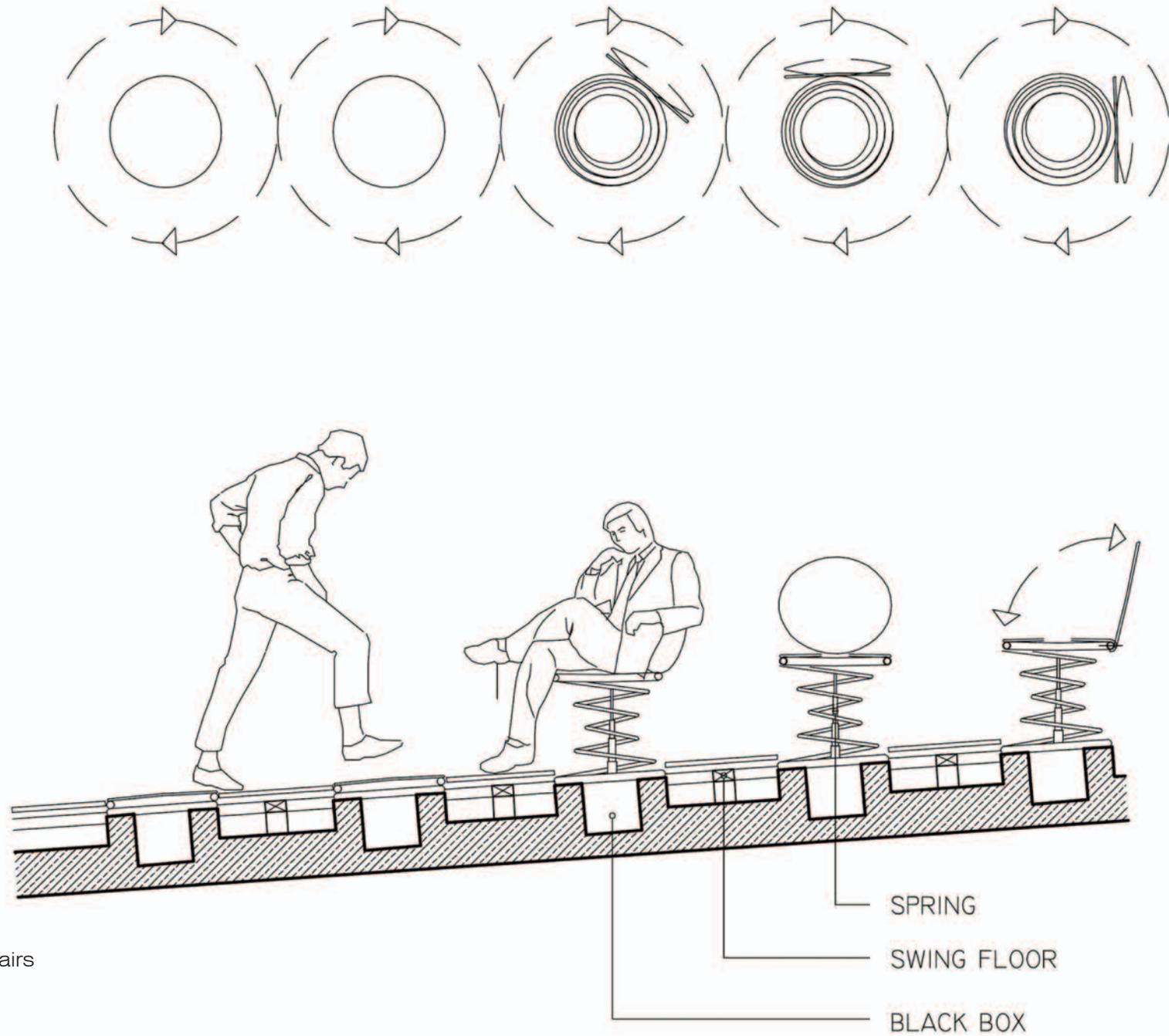
SECTION B-B

1m 5m 10m

fig.53



WASHINGTON CHANNEL



Dancing Chairs

fig.54

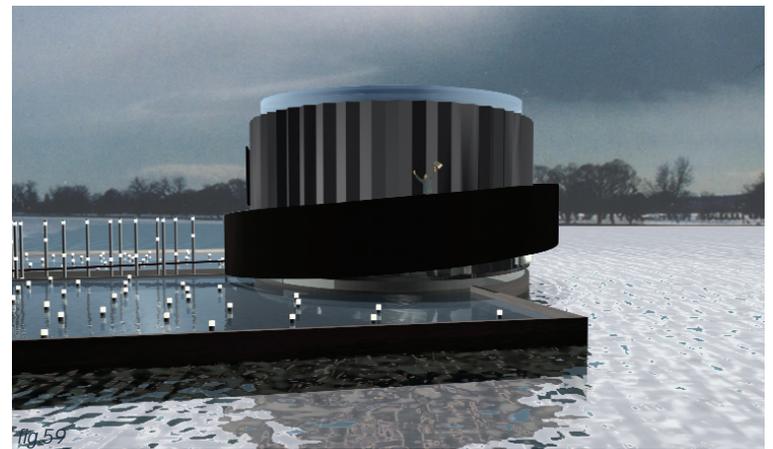
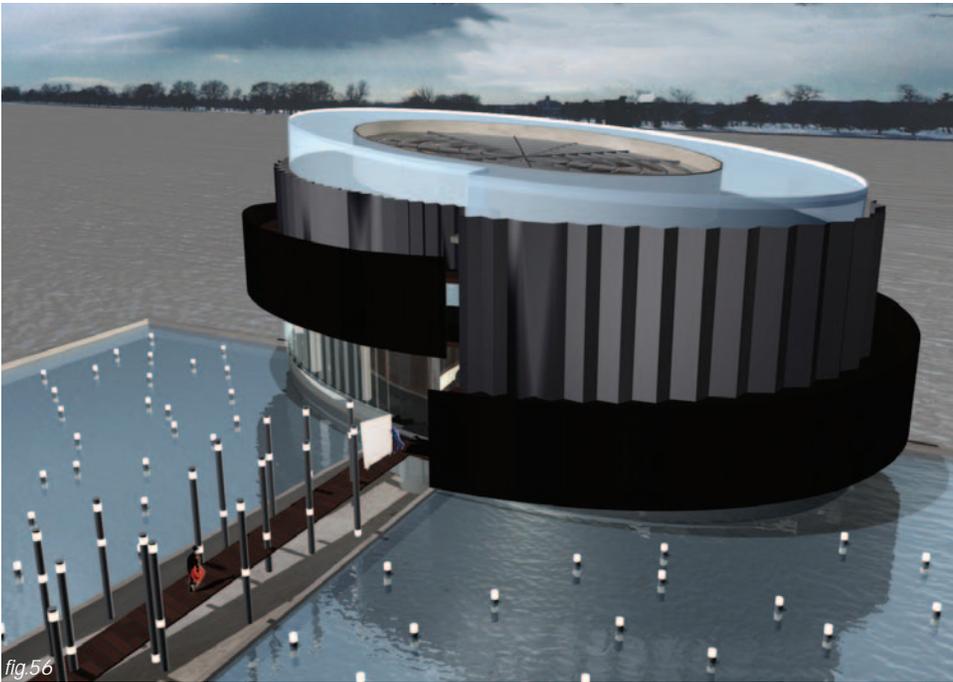
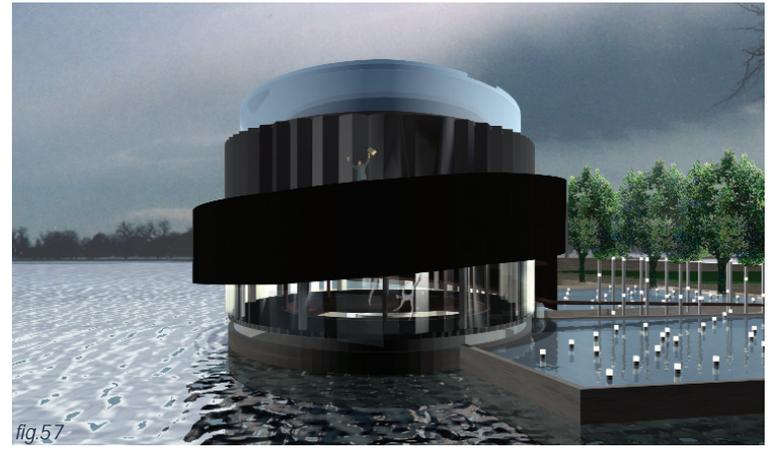




fig.60

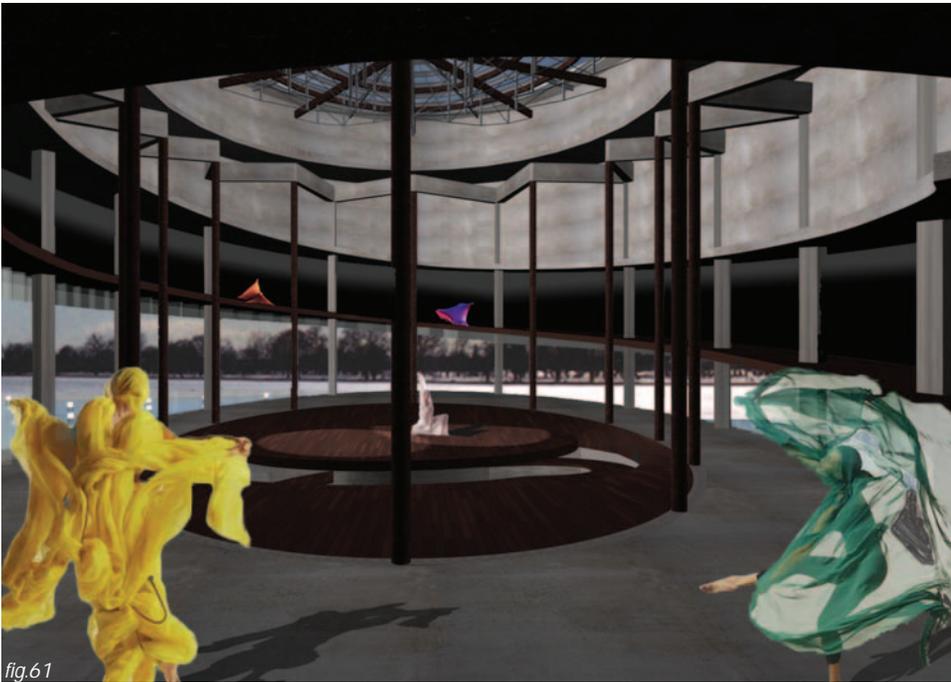


fig.61

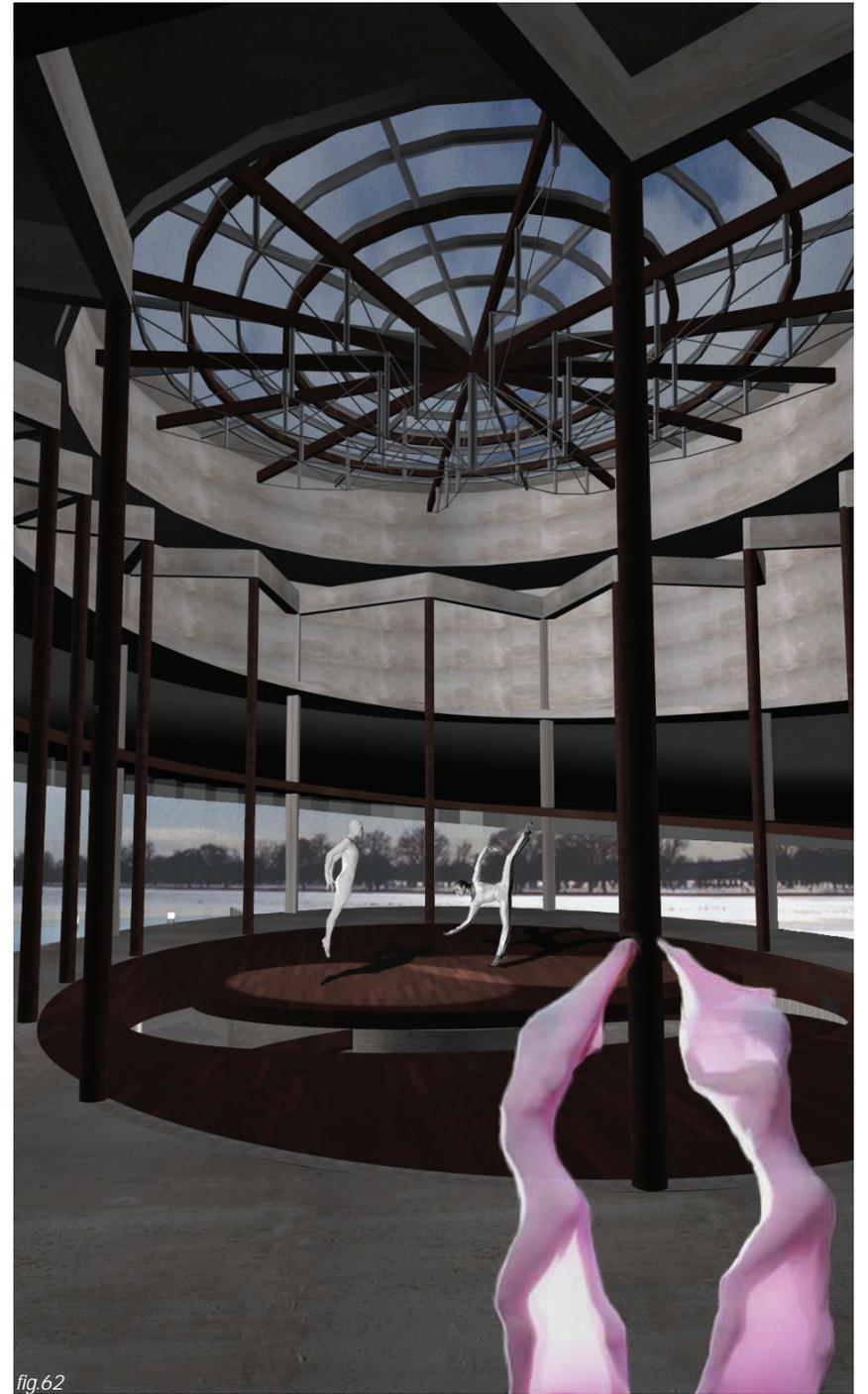


fig.62

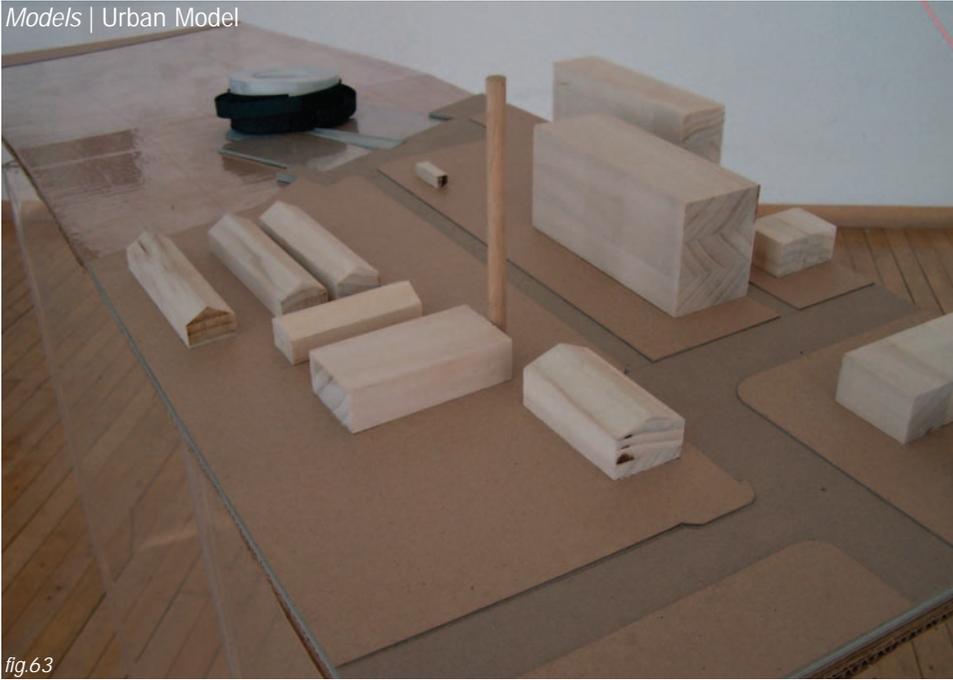


fig.63

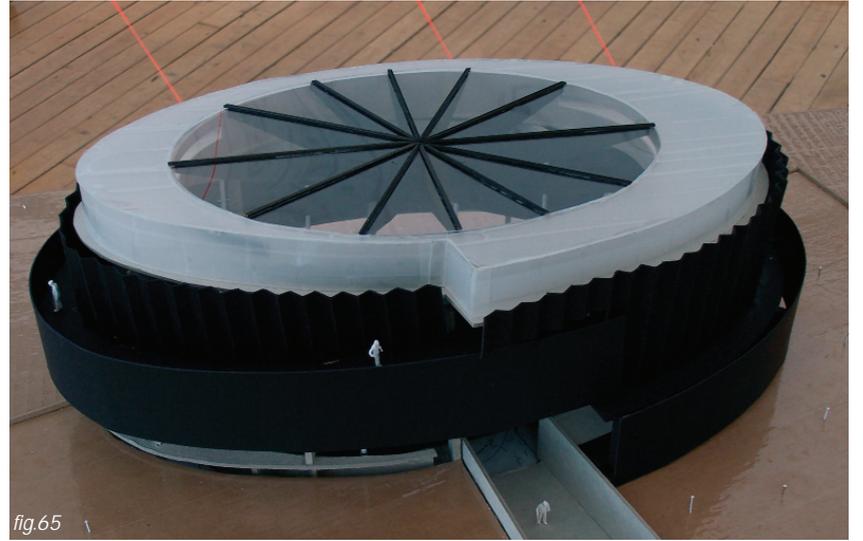


fig.65

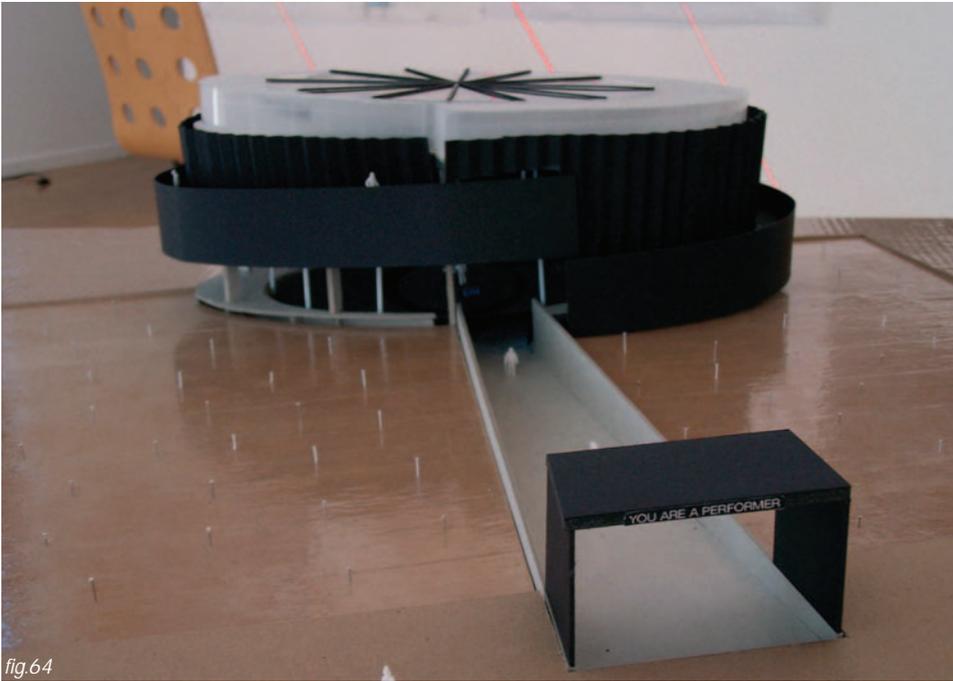


fig.64

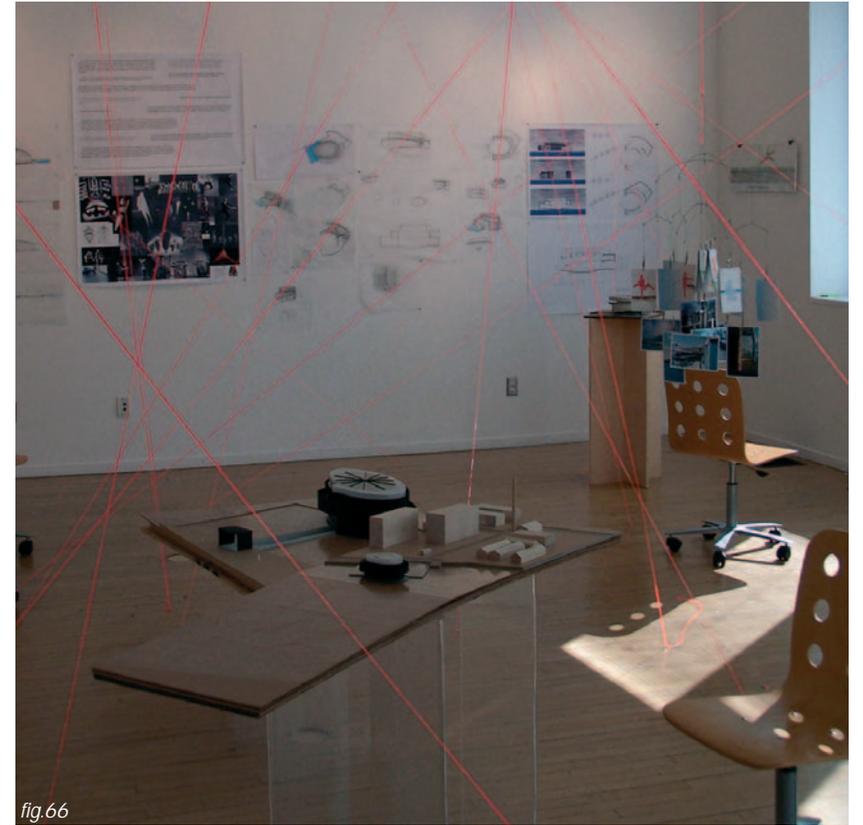


fig.66

Conclusion | Defense

Magic derives from the abstract
That is our imagination
Translation happens through communication
That is drawing and building
Applying magic is to give the abstract shape
That is what we learn at school
For we are the real magicians once having learned the
language
And through practice, practice, practice...
...Until the meaningful arrives



fig.68



fig.67

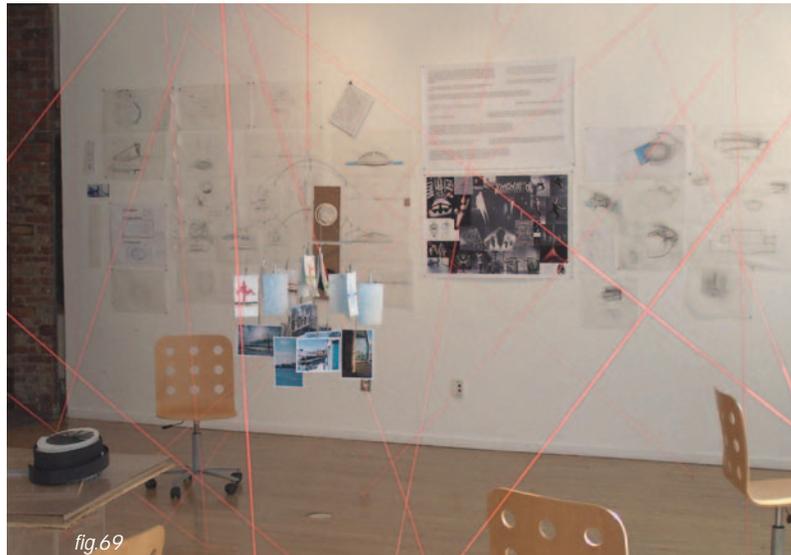


fig.69



fig.70



fig.71

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- 96-00 Dipl.-Ing. of Architecture,
University of Applied Sciences, Hamburg

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